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THE MINISTRY OF KESWICK

FIRST SERIES

Edited by

HERBERT F. STEVENSON

Editor: THE LIFE OF FAITH;
THE KESWICK WEEK

THE MINISTRY OF KESWICK

The main Bible studies at each Keswick Convention are the Bible Readings on the mornings of Monday to Thursday.

The selection of Bible Readings is divided into two handsome volumes:—

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A SELECTION FROM
THE BIBLE READINGS DELIVERED AT
THE KESWICK CONVENTION

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INTRODUCTION

KESWICK AND ITS BIBLE READINGS

KESWICK CONVENTION was established with one clear purpose: the deepening of the spiritual life; the proclamation of the message of liberty from sin, and the reality of the "life more abundant," through the sovereignty of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The founders, and all the speakers of the early days, were men of profound conviction, who themselves had "entered into blessing" through this message: they therefore sought to pass on the "good news" of "full salvation" which had come to mean so much to them. They eschewed any other doctrine or facet of Christian faith and practice, at Keswick: these were not gatherings for the discussion of Christian truths in general, but the declaration of one message only. This they summed up in the twin phrases, "The promotion of Scriptural holiness," and "The promotion of practical holiness." The two-fold emphasis is deeply significant: the Keswick message is essentially Scriptural; it is equally practical, and related to everyday Christian living. The Convention has never been concerned to propagate a doctrine of holiness, but to promote true sanctification in daily life. It is amazing to us today to read in the records of the early years, of the determined efforts of the "founding fathers" of the Convention to preserve this singleness of purpose, even to the exclusion of missionary interest, lest it should distract from the one theme and deflect from the one goal.

No living organism can be fast bound by limitations such as these, however: where there is life, there must be growth; spiritual vitality must express itself creatively. This has been strikingly manifest at Keswick in two developments which have become outstanding aspects of the Convention's ministry. The missionary commission of the Church, resolutely treated as something distinctive and apart from Keswick, had after a time to be embraced as an integral part of its message, and soon claimed the longest meeting of the entire Convention. And systematic Bible teaching, though violating the initial pattern of dependence upon the leading of the Spirit from meeting to meeting, nevertheless has become the most prominent feature of the annual gatherings.

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It was in 1881, six years after the inception of the Convention, that Mr. H. F. Bowker, a prominent leader of those days—and subsequently successor to Canon T. D. Harford-Battersby, the founder, as Chairman—delivered the first "Bible Reading," and on three subsequent mornings the first *series* of addresses so designated was delivered by the Rev. Hubert Brooke. This young clergyman—then only a curate—excelled in such ministry, and became the acknowledged "prince" among expositors at Keswick for over thirty years. He had one peer—Prebendary Webb-Peploe: indeed, over a long period the Bible Readings were almost exclusively in the hands of one or other of these two—or of both!

From 1886 onwards, there were two tents, in each of which a full programme of meetings was held, including Bible Readings. Very often a series by one speaker would be delivered in one tent —usually by one of these two "giants"—while different speakers would share the ministry in the other tent. Sometimes they both delivered series, one in each tent. Only very occasionally did any other speaker deliver a series of Readings. These rare exceptions, however, provide us—together with the many series by Hubert Brooke and Webb-Peploe—with a rich storehouse of neglected treasure, by speakers of exceptional gifts, upon enthralling Biblical themes: and some of this treasure is displayed in this selection of outstanding Bible Readings. The reasons for their choice, for inclusion in this volume, and the circumstances attending their delivery, are explained in the brief introductory notes preceding each series.

From 1914 we have a rather wider choice of speakers delivering the Bible Readings—though still somewhat restricted: for the tendency to confine this particular ministry to a few "specialists" therein, persists—Dr. W. Graham Scroggie, for instance, delivered no fewer than eleven series between 1914 and 1954, besides single Bible Readings on other occasions. In addition to the Bible Readings, however, very similar series of addresses have frequently been given at the mid-day and—in more recent years—afternoon meetings; indeed, some of these have been scarcely distinguishable from Bible Readings. One of the most popular—though controversial—speakers in recent times, Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse, of Philadelphia, delivered such series on several occasions, and the morning Bible Readings once: and anyone who could tell the difference between the afternoon studies and the official Bible Readings would be skilful indeed! We have, therefore, included some such series in one or other of these two volumes, as ranking with the Bible Readings, and equally representative of the instructional and expository ministry of the Convention.

It is interesting to trace the development in the character of the Bible Readings, through the years. We have referred to *series* of them; and today we take for granted that the Keswick Bible Readings will deal with a book or portion of Scripture, or trace a Biblical theme through the Word. This, however, is a comparatively recent conception. In earlier years, the Bible Readings were each complete in themselves, with very little or no connecting theme. This was in accord with the pattern of the Convention of those days, when no programme was drawn up or arrangements made in advance, but the chairman and speakers waited upon the Lord concerning His messenger and message, from meeting to meeting. Even when the Bible Readings were given by one speaker, this principle prevailed. A typical "series" of such Readings is that of the Rev. Hubert Brooke in 1892—the first to be reported in full, and included here as representative of the Convention's ministry of that era. It will be seen that the "Bible Readings" differed little, if at all, from ordinary Convention addresses. Indeed, in its report of the Convention of 1893, *The Christian* observed: "All the addresses are largely of the nature of Bible Readings, from the free quotation of Scripture, that is intermingled . . ." Two years earlier, the same journal had observed of one of Prebendary Webb-Peploe's Bible Readings, that it was "scarcely a Bible Reading in the usual sense . . ." and that could be said of many in those days.

Mr. Brooke—the "pioneer" of Keswick Bible Readings—broke new ground once more in 1900, with the first *connected* series, on "Lessons from Leviticus." This theme was taken again in 1921, by the Rev. J. Russell Howden; and by the Rev. W. W. Martin in 1930—and his series is included here (second series) because the response to the appeal for consecration made at the close of the final message marked one of the most memorable occasions at Keswick in living memory.

Another surprise—to the compiler, at least—was to discover that the section of Scripture generally regarded as central to the Keswick message, Romans 5–8, was not the subject of a series of Bible Readings before 1937, and has never been thus expounded by any of the Convention's most eminent spokesmen—by which we mean men whose names were in their day, and since, closely associated with Keswick: the nearest approach to it was when Dr. W. Graham Scroggie surveyed the Epistle to the Romans as a whole in 1958. Indeed, not only has the range of speakers delivering Bible Readings been limited, but also the variety of topics. The "sequence of teaching" concerning sin, conviction, cleansing and deliverance, and empowering by the indwelling Spirit, has been covered again and again; also closely related

variants of the essential Keswick message—especially in the earlier years, as we have seen. The present selection inevitably reflects this limitation of subject-matter: but it re-emphasises how closely the Convention adheres to the purposes and single-mindedness of the founders.

* * *

From its early days, Keswick—like most movements born of the Spirit—has had its critics; and a favourite jibe has always been, that the Convention is a spiritual "hot-house," where crises and "decisions" are precipitated in an atmosphere of tense emotion. Such charges are usually made by people who have little or no first-hand knowledge of the Convention, but who give rein to their imaginations concerning it. No more salutary corrective could be suggested, than a perusal of the Keswick Bible Readings. For sane, balanced, spiritually-minded, yet practical and truly helpful exposition of the Word of God, these are surely hard to equal.

* * *

This book is a companion to *Keswick's Authentic Voice*, a selection of sixty-five outstanding addresses delivered at the Convention over a period of eighty years, presenting the Keswick message in all its range and fullness, as actually proclaimed on the Convention platform. The welcome accorded to it inspired this selection of representative Bible Readings. Indeed, investigations for that volume revealed in the Keswick reports a veritable mine of expository wealth and spiritual treasure. We have gathered a handful of nuggets of gold from the bountiful supply.

A cherished characteristic of Keswick is its truly ecumenical outlook, expressed in its motto, "All One in Christ Jesus." Barriers and distinctions of all kinds are levelled, as clergy, ministers and laymen of various Churches and assemblies unite in seeking "the deepening of the spiritual life." This fellowship in Christ is reflected in the range of speakers represented in this book. It is eminently fitting that it should include several from America. Keswick owed its inception to an impetus from the U.S.A., and American speakers have had an honoured place on its platform throughout its history. All have abundantly demonstrated that "All one in Christ Jesus" was not merely their motto for the Convention week, but the abiding reality of their faith and experience.

H.F.S.

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I

FIRST RECORDED BIBLE READINGS

by the

Rev. Hubert Brooke, M.A.

1892

THE REV. HUBERT BROOKE

For over thirty years, the Rev. Hubert Brooke was a dominating figure at Keswick, who became almost a legend in his own life-time. He gave the Bible Readings more often than any other speaker: indeed, this part in the ministry of the Convention seemed to be his by prescriptive right, and when he was unable to be present in 1886, *The Christian* reported sadly, "At the Bible Readings each day the Rev. Hubert Brooke's clear and attractive unfolding of the Word of Life were greatly missed; and many felt, when they found that ill-health had forced him to be absent, that one of the best features of the Keswick week was gone. . . ." An even greater claim to fame lay in the fact that Hubert Brooke—as we have seen—virtually established the Bible Readings as a feature of the Convention; he made them his special sphere of ministry, and seldom gave any other addresses.

A slim man, dogged by ill-health, a portrait of him taken late in life, in W. B. Sloan's Jubilee survey of the Convention, *These Sixty Years*, reveals both Hubert Brooke's physical frailty—indicated in his aesthetic and pain-drawn features—and his strength of character. He had a neatly-trimmed, white beard, and penetrating eyes gleaming behind gold-framed spectacles. He was a Bible teacher *par excellence*; and J. B. Figgis, historian of Keswick's first forty years, wrote: "Surely there never was anyone more eminently the right man in the right place than Mr. Brooke at a Bible Reading! His style, clear as a frosty night and bright as its stars, as full of vivacity as of solemnity, exactly suited the light touch of topic after topic, from page to page, and book to book, of the wonderful Word of God."

From his first three Bible Readings in 1881, Mr. Brooke made this ministry so peculiarly his own, that when he was absent through illness in 1886 and 1887, a written address which he had been able to send, was read, in both years. His return in 1888 was warmly welcomed—and strangely, both *The Life of Faith* and *The Christian* in their reports of the Convention that year, made the mistake of referring to his "three years' silence" and "three years enforced absence," and Sloan repeats the error in *These Sixty Years*. When ill again in 1891, the reports speak of his "lamented absence"—so nearly indispensable did he seem. He continued to hold this unique place—though his attendances were increasingly broken by illness—until 1913, in which year, for a change, he spoke at other Convention meetings, and did not give Bible Readings: then his state of health kept him from Keswick until 1925, when he was prevailed upon to give two Bible Readings at the Jubilee Convention. The first world war had effected a great

change at Keswick, however, as in our entire national life, and Hubert Brooke seemed a figure from the remote past, and a voice from a very different era, to the new generation, which was farther removed in fact from that of 1914 than the number of years would ordinarily signify. This was Mr. Brooke's swan-song at Keswick: he lived until 1930, but was not able to be present again.

The Readings which follow are those of 1892, chosen because they are the first to be fully reported, and are characteristic of the earlier years: each complete in itself, without any connecting theme. They were regarded as especially stimulating and helpful, and W. B. Sloan says concerning them, "Once again Mr. Hubert Brooke's Bible Readings brought great help, and his emphasis upon the Church's outlook, and how it ought to be toward the whole wide world, met with a hearty response, and prepared the way for the Keswick Mission meeting on the Wednesday, and the missionary meeting on the Saturday."

I

DWELLING IN UNITY

PSALM 133 is entitled "A song of degrees of David," and so are the thirteen psalms before it and one psalm after it, giving us altogether fifteen songs of degrees. They were, perhaps, sung by Israel as they came up to the yearly Feast of Tabernacles. It may be that they started from their homes in little households and commenced singing the first of these songs of degrees; and then as they fell in with their neighbouring households they took up the next song of degrees. As households became little communities, they sang the third; and as communities joined in districts, they sang the fourth; and so tribe joined tribe until, as they came within sight of the walls of Zion and ascended the hill, they sang these closing songs—the last but one, the song of unity, and then the last, the song of praise.

As the song of praise is sung, the end is reached, for we cannot get higher than that. As Israel sang these songs on their way to the House of God, so God's people sing these songs too, sometimes consciously, and oftentimes unconsciously making melody in their hearts unto the Lord. They, too, will begin with the first of these songs of degrees, and will go on singing up to the last, the song of praise, which opens the door of heaven and takes them into the perfect rest. The Church of God sings these songs, and sings them with intelligence as it grows in the experience of them, for they are really songs of degrees or steps, each one being higher than the one preceding.

Here then, in this 133rd Psalm, we come to the last step but one. This is the step or platform of unity, and is situate, as it were, far on in the heavenly journey near the end. There is only one more song—the song of praise; and as we are singing that, we shall find ourselves joined by the company round the throne, and we shall be singing it together there. How many of us have known the Lord for as many years as there are songs of degrees? We ought to make at least one step in advance every year, and so all who have known Him for fourteen years ought to be able to sing this one. Some children of God, like boys at school, are not moved up a step further than in the former year. Sometimes they go

up two or three in the year; and sometimes they seem to pass through several at a bound. But growing children in intelligence, as well as in age, ought to be passing from one to another of these songs: to be learning to sing them, and to show them in their lives.

We have here a song of degrees, sung probably at the scene in Israel described in 2 Samuel 5: 3, "So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and King David made a league with them in Hebron before the Lord; and they anointed David king over Israel." And in 1 Chronicles 12: 38, we find a little more about it, where, besides mentioning many others from many tribes, it winds up by saying: "And all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king." That was the sight to which David pointed his people and said, "Behold!" That was a sight to look at; and it will be a grand sight when we are able to say to the world outside "Behold!" Hitherto we have often had to say, "Listen!" and they have listened, but they have not seen. The eye takes in testimony sometimes better than the ear; and when you do your part and are able, each one of you, to say not only "*Hear* what God in His love does to His people; what a pleasant people He makes out of them," but "*Behold!* how good and pleasant a thing it is,"—why, then, you are just doing what the Lord Himself said: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." They shall hear it—that is good; but they shall also see and know it, and that is better. As far as you and I are concerned, may God give us that grace. He loves to give definitely; and when His children ask Him for definite blessings and expect them, then they get them. Shall we ask Him for these? As far as each child of God is concerned, we may go away from this convention able to say: "Behold! how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

"How *good* and how *pleasant* a thing!" Perhaps that means good in the sight of God, and pleasant in the eyes of men. You know that the world always says that good things are unpleasant, and pleasant things are not good. The Word of God says that good things are pleasant things, and that the really pleasant things are the good ones. Shall we begin by believing God, that the good things are really pleasant ones? Of course, when we believe this, we shall long and look for them, and presently we shall look like them, and people will see them in us, as well as hear about them from us.

"Behold! how good and pleasant a thing it is for *brethren*!" This tells us at once that it is a family scene. You know, I suppose, that we are here to speak to those who are inside the family of Christ. You cannot grow in grace unless you have been born

again in Christ. You cannot grow in His knowledge unless you have begun to know Him. You cannot advance in holiness unless you have first of all found salvation in Christ Jesus; and so we must profess, openly and clearly, that all we teach here is on the foundation laid once for all, the only foundation that can be laid, which is Christ Jesus. Until any single soul is born again by God's Holy Spirit, and is made His in Christ Jesus, that person may talk about growing, but he cannot grow; he may hear about holiness, but he cannot be holy. It is only those that are in Christ that are saints, and saints mean holy ones. In 1 Thessalonians 1: 1 you read that Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus send their greetings "unto *the Church* of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father." And in the fourth verse he says to the members of the Church, "Knowing, *brethren* beloved, your election." By joining these two titles of "church" and "brethren," you see that God's Word uses them as common terms for His people, uniting them together; and not (as some do) as separating terms, dividing them asunder. So, then, the true brethren are the best Churchmen, and the best Churchmen are the real brethren.

It is well to remember that, because, if we are to dwell together in unity, we must come more and more to think the same things, and to say the same things. If some will appropriate to themselves peculiarly the titles that God's Word gives to all His people, let them at the same time include in these terms all that God includes in them. Remember that the Lord Jesus Christ said, "One is your Master, even Christ, and *all ye are brethren.*" It is in Jesus Christ that the *whole* family in heaven and earth are named. It is not likely that the brethren in the family will dwell together in unity until they recognise that they are all brethren in Christ—those whom the Lord Jesus Christ is not ashamed to call brethren. And oh, friends, if He is not ashamed to call His believing people brethren, we ought to be proud to do it.

"To dwell together in unity." Perhaps this was what they were singing at the Tabernacle Feast when they did all come to dwell together, and to dwell *even together*, as the words may be rendered. The Greek version of the Old Testament uses the very same words for "dwelling in unity" that are used in Acts 2: 1, "in one place." That is a remarkable connection. This psalm, which gives us the secret under which God commands the blessing, contains the same word that is used when in Acts 2 we see the blessing commanded. "When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place"—they were dwelling in unity, or *even together*, just as brethren ought to do in all well-ordered

households. For Israel, as for the people of God in all ages, there was only one secret of unity, namely, that they were all submitting to the one Master. Israel was never dwelling in unity except at the time when they were completely submitting to their king David. God wants His people to dwell together in unity, and thereby to exhibit to the world that they are His disciples, and that Jesus is the Christ.

Then David goes on to tell us in this psalm what the experience of such a condition as this is like. He gives us, first of all, a simile from the inside of the house, and afterwards a simile from the outside of the house. It is inside the temple of God where the high priest is anointed with the precious ointment. It is something known only inside the house. Only Israel can see and hear and know about the anointing of the high priest: and when Israel dwells together in unity, it is something so holy that it can only be likened to the sacred oil wherewith Aaron was anointed when he was made a high priest. "It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments." This spirit of unity binds brethren together, and makes them as truly one body as Aaron's body was one when he was anointed high priest over Israel. You know how that oil was specially appointed of God. No one might make anything like it, and no one might use it for any other purpose than this one. Here is something which tells us that it is altogether a thing of heaven. It is God, and God alone, that maketh men to be of one mind in the house, and who compounds this ointment of the Holy Ghost in His sevenfold power, and pours it out on the head. And this wonderful unity is not something that we can make, though, alas, it is often something that we mar. It is something that God makes; and when he wants to show us what it is like, He takes us into His holy temple, and shows us the high priest there clothed with garments according to God's own order. The holy oil is poured out upon the high priest's head, and flows down over his shoulders and covers every name of the tribes of Israel inscribed thereon, in the place of strength (Ex. 28: 12). The anointing oil of God binds God's people together in unity and in power. A bundle of sticks united cannot be broken, but separated they can be snapped. That is why there are snappish Christians on all sides: they are not united together.

We see that the oil flowed down Aaron's beard, and his beard rested upon his breastplate, where the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were overflowed with this anointing oil, as they rested over the great heart of the high priest, or the place of love (Ex. 28: 29). And as this anointing oil of the Holy Ghost, flowing

down from the head upon the united members of the body, binds them together, as it were, in the strength of God, so it also binds them together in the love of God. But the oil flows down, we are told, even to the skirts of the high priest's garments. There are some Christians here today who come and listen to the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. Then they make a distinction or addition of their own and say, "God has prepared these things for them that love Him a little more than I do. Therefore these are not for me." But if these people even represented the lowest portion of the body—the foot—the holy oil fell upon the skirts of the garments of the high priest, and there was no portion of the body of the high priest that was not under the influence of the anointing oil.

So much for the picture inside the House of God. But it is to be seen also outside the House of God. We are told, further, that this dwelling together in unity is "as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." Some people have thought that this Zion was the two little shoulders of Sion that were just underneath Hermon (Deut. 4: 48), and that the words refer to the dew gathered about the head of Hermon, and resting upon its shoulders. But it is perfectly clear that Zion and not Sion was meant. The picture is this: Mount Hermon—right away on the extreme top of Palestine just beyond the borders of Dan, the northern-most tribe—stood out as the head of the whole land. It was the source of the river Jordan, the river of blessing and cleansing; it was the gatherer of clouds, and as they came sweeping down from the north, north-east, or north-west, they would gather round this mountain-peak of Hermon, whence from the head of the land they broke gently away and floated down throughout the whole of Palestine, falling on portion after portion, until they came to the southern-most portion of all. And on Zion, whose name means arid or barren, the clouds or dew descended, causing fruitfulness even there.

What a course these clouds had to take! How many interruptions they are liable to on the way. Certainly they are in the antitype, if they are not in the type. As they first broke away from the top of Mount Hermon, they had to go over Dan —and Dan was the *judging* tribe. And perhaps it is oftentimes the case that the blessed anointing of God's Holy Spirit—this uniting power—never gets past the tribe of Dan, for they rise up and judge their brethren to be unworthy of receiving it, keeping it all for themselves. It is just because the Lord's people are so ready to do what He has told them not to do—to "judge not, that ye be not judged"—that they stop the flow, and the clouds

and the dew get no further. The judging spirit puts a stop to the flow of the Holy Ghost.

The cloud passes next over Naphtali, the *wrestling*, contentious brother. People may contend for the truth, perhaps, but they often do not contend in love; and because there is a spirit of contention, each one wishing to decide by his own standard, there is another interruption in the flow of this wondrous dew from Mount Hermon. Such people wrestle not with God for the blessing, but wrestle with their brother, seeking, perhaps, to keep from him and for themselves a blessing that God only means to rest on them, that it may go from them.

Then the cloud goes down to Zebulun, the *busy* tribe that reaches out to the sea-shore. Christian people are often so full of business that the things which God means to be used rightly as blessings, they make hindrances of, and thus prevent the flow of His Holy Spirit.

Next the dew falls on the tribe of Issachar, the *knowing* men (1 Chron. 12: 32). How oftentimes Christians who know better than others, do not show better than others! They seem to keep and absorb for themselves the gifts, and pride themselves upon them.

Then came Ephraim, the *ruling* tribe. God gives rule and intends rule; but instead of ruling for Him alone, we may desire to rule for ourselves, and to keep for ourselves those things that God meant us to distribute to others.

Then the dew-clouds float over Benjamin, who, "dwelling between His shoulders," offers no hindrance to their passage; they can pass on and rest on parched Zion, and parched Zion becomes a living source of living waters, from whence the living waters could flow out into all lands.

What a wonderful picture of God's people dwelling together in unity! But while it is a wonderful picture, it is a solemn one. As far as we are concerned, the fullness of blessing—not only that which we get in Keswick, but that which we may learn to give out from Keswick—will require every single soul to gain it, and may be prevented by a single one.

What happens when brethren dwell together in unity? Their Lord commands the blessing. That is the very thing that is talked about at Keswick, sometimes to the disturbance of people who do not come to Keswick. They say, "You are always talking about blessing. What do you mean?" We mean just what is meant in Psalm 133, "There the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." In Leviticus 25: 21, you see what the commanded blessing is: "Then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit *for three*

years." God gives to the true Church, as their right and heritage, a double portion of His Holy Spirit; but when they dwell together in unity He commands a threefold blessing, that shall last out for their own needs and also for blessing to others. They shall never know what want is.

More than this is implied in a commanded blessing; for "The Lord *commanded, and it stood fast.*" Some people say, "Yes, Keswick was good a year ago, or five years ago. It was a wonderful time, but it did not last. It oozed away, and by-and-by it was gone." I am quite sure that if it oozed away, it was because the Lord had not commanded it. "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." You ask sometimes for fast colours, that need not be kept in the shaded light lest they should disappear. God's colours are all fast colours, and they shine out more brightly when they are in the sun, and fade only when they are hidden away from the light.

If you want to go down from this place of blessing with that blessing commanded, so that it shall stand fast, remember that the Lord commanded the blessing to be where brethren dwell together in unity; and that blessing is life for evermore—not life for evermore *in* you, but life for evermore *through* you. You will be able to tell people what the blessing is when you understand that it is life for evermore—life abundant, and life flowing out from you. You have never reached the fullness of the blessing until you prove that it is impossible to contain it within the storehouse of your heart, and that you must have a wider range for it. The storehouse would burst with fullness, and you must go and scatter it abroad to the ends of the earth for the glory of God. What a glorious blessing and outflowing; a fountain and stream that cannot be checked or limited.

I think, finally, that in order to secure this blessing we have each one to be very careful that we do one thing which you will find mentioned in Philippians 2: 3, "In lowliness of heart let each esteem other better than themselves." All those interrupting things that hinder the flow of the Spirit of God, the anointing oil, and the heavenly dew, all come through contention and division. You know what the wise man tells us in Proverbs 13: 10, "Only by pride cometh contention." That is the atmospheric disturbance in the Church of Christ; and you know that the dew never falls unless there is stillness. While there is storm and uproar and strife and contention in the Church of Christ, the dew will not rest.

It may seem to you hard at first to think that you can honestly esteem others better than yourselves; but I think you will find one little receipt that is sure to result in what you need. Spend the

time that you occupy in judging others, in judging yourselves, and you will not have a moment's difficulty in thinking yourselves least of all and lowest of all. We are come here together professedly believing in God's Word, and to search it in order to see what are the unexhausted blessings that we have not yet experienced. There is one: God's blessing commanded. He commands it in different forms. He commands *strength* for His people when they are weak; *loving-kindness* when they are depressed; *deliverances* when they are in danger; *salvation* when they are attacked (Psalms 42: 8; 44: 4; 68: 28; 71: 3).

Different forms of His blessing are apportioned to different needs of His people. When he commands it, it comes in threefold fullness and in abiding power. If you do believe it, it follows that you should have it. No one can be excluded from the duty of dwelling together with others in unity, which is one thing that must be maintained for God's glory, for God's blessing upon His people, and for God's blessing through His people to the world. When the Church was united in the first days, the Gospel was spread through the world: when there was one heart to make the Lord Jesus Christ King, one mind to do His will, and one aim to carry it out. They were so occupied with the Master that one had no time to find fault with another. Then unhindered, the anointing oil flowed down to the very skirts of the Saviour's garments. Every single member was full of the Holy Ghost, in the power of the Holy Ghost; and the blessing was commanded. We are in the outermost portion of the flow of it. It has not ceased to flow after 1900 years; and if we take it in its fullness, and let it reach out in its fullness, the world shall be shaken in wondrous measure by the blessing that God commands here this year, to the glory of His name. Amen.

II

GOD'S LANDMARKS

When the traveller in days of old walked through the land of Canaan, he came here and there upon significant memorials by which the past dealings of God in blessing, deliverance, and victory had been marked. He might pass by the place where God had delivered Jacob from the pursuing Laban, and where Jacob put up a pillar as a testimony that beyond that spot his enemies should not come over. As the traveller came further down in the land, he would come to the place where the great altar was put up by the two and a half tribes, to keep them in remembrance that they belonged to Israel, though they were on the other side of Jordan. Then, again, he would come to the place where the stones were set up at Bethel, as a mark that God revealed Himself to Jacob there. Next he might come to Gilgal, where the Lord had caused the people to go over the Jordan on dry land; and afterwards to the stone of Ebenezer, which had been put up to show that the Lord had delivered them. And so when strangers passed through the land, and asked those that dwelt there what was meant by this heap, and pillar, and stone, the people would tell them of God's dealings of blessing in the past, and God's covenants of mercy for the future.

As the Christian passes through the better land of God's own Word, he comes upon similar marks there; and as he looks at those, he finds also revelations of what God has done and what God will do, and sees proof of the fact that He is a covenant-keeping God for His own people. When we look at these things, we find they are landmarks not only for the whole Church, but for every single individual believer. And occasionally you find something additional to these landmarks—a sign-post finger pointing out, as much as to say: "Now there is something coming that is specially worth looking at and asking about." In the first six books of the Bible there are put down for us five of such sign-posts, that were to indicate distinct stages in Israel's experience and service. Five times do we find some significant ordinance, about which the children of God's people were intended to

say to their parents: "What mean ye by this service, by this ordinance, by these stones, and so on?" And in each of these cases God intended this service or memorial to be something of so striking a character, that generation after generation, as they sprang up, were bound to say to their parents: "This is something out of the common. It is not like the rest of your life, or the rest of the people of the world. What mean ye by this service?" And God gave them beforehand the answer that they were to give. Taking one by one the five occurrences just mentioned, you will see that they point out to you what ought to be equally apparent in your lives as Christians—significant marks intended by God to attract attention and to provoke inquiry. And we must be ready to give an answer to everyone that asks the reason of the hope that is in us.

The first of these occasions is found in Exodus 12, where *the Passover*, besides other purposes which it was to serve, was also designed to this end, that "When your children shall say unto you, 'What mean ye by this service?' that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses." Once a year something happened in Israel's life that the rising generation should always be struck by, and Israel was always to be prepared to explain. Thus God prepared for them, in days when written Scriptures were few and far between, a method by which the first great principles of His salvation should be handed down from father to son. The fathers were to tell them to their children, and the children to their successors, so that every generation of God's people might know the wonderful works of God. Thus, as they kept the Passover year by year, and their children said to them, "What mean ye by this service?" they were bidden to give the answer: "This is the Lord's Passover, who passed over our houses when He smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses."

Salvation is a very full and wide word, and has far more in it than merely the forgiveness of sins. Nevertheless, in this latter sense it is intended to be something that marks the first stage of the Christian life. When we come to the table of the Lord, and our children say to us, "What mean ye by this service?" we ought to be as ready at once to give an answer, as Israel was ready to give an answer. "This is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover," *they* said; "This is a memorial of Christ's sacrifice," *we* say, "who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world."

It is beautiful to notice that this answer bound the soul's inquiry to God. It was *the Lord's Passover* from beginning to end.

It was the Lord who commanded the lamb to be slain. He also told the Israelites to sprinkle the blood, in order that they should be delivered from the destroying angel. It was the Lord who did it, once for all. So also our redemption was accomplished by Christ once for all. A personal salvation is imparted once for all to every believing soul; a full forgiveness of sins possessed once for all by those who come to Christ. And they are to say, as Israel said: "It was the Lord who did it—the Lord who gave the lamb, and sprinkled the blood, and delivered our houses," and "who," as Paul says, "delivered us from the wrath to come."

It is most important to notice the way in which Israel gave the answer. They gave it without a moment's hesitation as to the fact, and as to the certainty of the fact. They never said: "It is the Lord's Passover, who passed over our houses and *we hope He delivered them.*" They knew for a certain fact the foundation on which they rested, and on which they had received blessing. And for us there is no other foundation or starting-point for asking for God's blessing, but in salvation through Jesus Christ —a possession of the forgiveness of sins, and the assurance that we are saved once for all.

For the second of the five ordinances, Exodus 13: 6–10. Bound up intimately and inseparably with the lesson of the Passover is the lesson of the Feast of Unleavened Bread; and that was simply, from beginning to end, a lesson of *separation.* Turn for a moment to Exodus 12: 15, "Even the first day ye shall *put away* leaven out of your houses"; and in v. 19, "Seven days shall there be *no leaven found* in your houses"; 13: 3, "There shall *no leavened* bread be eaten"; v. 7, "Neither shall there be leaven *seen* with thee in all thy quarters." There is a thorough-going separation from beginning to end. Leaven was to be totally put away from the moment that the Passover feast was to be kept. Mark the successive phrases: "put away, not found, not eaten, not seen," as indicating the completeness of this separation from leaven, by all who kept the Passover. We in the same manner grasp only one-half of the fullness of salvation if we do not see that in coming to Christ to be forgiven there is also a call to instant separation. In Luke 12: 1 we see what leaven is: "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." Then in 1 Corinthians 5: 7, 8, "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Hypocrisy, malice, and wickedness—hypocrisy, the outward garb of appearance which is not like the inward reality; malice,

the inward thought of evil; wickedness, the outward practice of evil—are therefore things to be totally separated from, the moment that we receive Christ as our salvation and accept Him as our Paschal Lamb.

When the Israelite proceeds year by year to obey this command, we are told, first of all, that he casts out of his house all the leaven he knows to be there. He goes to the kneading trough and scrapes it carefully, that no leaven may be left there. Then he searches in the place where the leaven might be kept, and casts every portion of it out. Then he lights a candle and searches in out-of-the-way corners, to make sure that not one speck is left; after which he lifts up his hands to God, and says, "O God, I have cast out all the leaven from my house, and if there is any leaven that I do not know of, with all my heart I cast it out too." That is the separation to which God calls His redeemed people. It was as definite an act for Israel as the Passover Supper was. It is a strange thing that some people, who are as clear as daylight upon the fact that there is no difficulty in people being converted to God in a moment, and quite believe in the possibility of a sudden conversion, are yet under the fixed impression that the casting out of malice and hypocrisy must necessarily be gradual. Though the Passover blood might be applied at any moment, yet they believe that the casting out of the leaven must take ever so many years; that hypocrisy, malice, and envy must be cast out by degrees, though Israel cast out in a moment, by the command of God, the leaven that symbolised these evils. There are plenty of other things for which you will need to go to the Lord Jesus, to ask Him for deliverance from their power of evil. For there never comes a time in the Christian life when we do not need to say the Lord's Prayer from beginning to end, including the words, "Forgive us our trespasses." As we need daily bread, we need daily forgiveness.

The point for us here is malice, wickedness, and hypocrisy—hypocrisy, the outward, false appearance of holiness, denied by the inward experience; malice, the hidden purpose of evil; and wickedness, its outward manifestation. From these the believer is called upon to separate himself once for all. It was to be such a striking separation that the children of Israel should say to their parents, "What mean ye by this?" Oh, that the children of God's Israel today might be struck continually by the disappearance from their parents' lives of the things from which God has called them to be separated. They ought to be asked, "What mean ye by this? why do you not do those things that other people do?" There are things which other people allow themselves to do, but which God's people are not to allow themselves to do for a

moment. And God's people ought to be ready to give an answer at once, and say, "This is done, and those other things are not done, because of that which the Lord did for me."

So, you see, they must be quite certain that the Lord *has* done it for them, or they could not talk like that of their consequent action. This is the Lord coming near to His people and saying, "Because of that I have done for thee, there is this which thou hast done for me." Do not let us have any hypocrisy. By the grace of God, let us cast it out. If we mean to serve God with all our heart, if His service is perfect freedom, and His law is a delight to us, and if we want to be what God would have us to be, let there be honest dealing with this matter at once in our hearts before God. If any souls here today are conscious that hypocrisy or malice mark their lives in any way, or any evil practice is still retained, by the grace of God cast it out now before we get any further, and tell God that with all your heart, as far as you are concerned, you will, trusting in Him to help you, keep it out for ever.

The third significant ordinance occurs in the same thirteenth chapter, v. 14, where the Lord has commanded Moses to teach the people the lesson of the dedication or *sanctification* of their first-born to God. "It shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' that thou shalt say unto him: By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage." And so, that same thing for the third time is brought up for a third reason. First of all, it was the reason given for the passover supper, the memorial of God's finished work of salvation. Again, it was a reason for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, to manifest our calling by separation from known and conscious evil. And now we are called upon to manifest something more, and that is sanctification.

Notice, first, that the Lord defines this act by three different words: v. 2, "*Sanctify* unto me all the first-born"; v. 12, "Thou shalt *set apart* unto the Lord"; v. 15, "Therefore I *sacrifice* unto the Lord." Three phrases to describe the action which God required from His people: sanctifying, setting apart, sacrificing—and all indicating a single definite act done to these first-born. Now these first-born represented, and stood for, all the house of Israel. For you will remember that when Israel was in Egypt, and the judging hand of God was going through the land, the first-born was after all only the representative for all Egypt and Israel. In the first-born of Egypt, God executed judgment; and in the first-born of Israel, God diverted judgment. The first-born of God's deliverance was the representative of all their house. And God says that those first-born of Israel belong to

Him; and His claim to the possession of them was acknowledged by sanctifying them to God. By-and-by, you know that God took in place of those first-born the Levites, and every single first-born of Israel had to be represented by a Levite, so that no one family was left out. These Levites were taken by Israel deliberately, and they were waved as a wave-offering to God, and given over to Him for ever; and God took and used them (see Num. 8). That is what God calls upon His people to do still. Paul calls upon us: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice to God." You are to do exactly with your bodies, you who are members of the Church of the First-born, what Israel was told to do with their first-born for God. They were to sanctify, set apart, or sacrifice them deliberately and once for all to God.

"Once for all!" I know quite well that some people do not like that idea, that there is any aspect in which sanctification is a matter of one definite and abiding action. Nevertheless, God's Word here teaches that it is so; and Israel was told in every case to sanctify their first-born once for all to God. Israel was to sanctify her first-born once for all.

But do not suppose that, when they had been sanctified, that was all the first-born had to do. Not at all. That was the special door to the special service that God gave them to fulfil. No Levite could begin to do the full service of the sanctuary, until he was definitely consecrated to God. There was bound to be an initial act, before there came to be a practical life of consecration day by day. I do not think any of our brethren would say for a moment that there *must* be in your life one conscious moment when this sanctification takes place; but let us be honest enough to allow from the passage before us that there *may* be such a conscious moment. We do not say that you all *must* know the moment of the time when you were converted, but certainly you ought to know the fact that you *are* converted. And so, though there may not be in your lives a knowledge of the moment when you were first consecrated to God; yet there *may* be that moment. And whether you know the moment or not, it is certain that you who are believers in Jesus Christ, redeemed by His blood, and separated from conscious evil, *ought to know* as clearly as Israel did that you are sanctified to God, belong to Him and are united to Him, body, soul, and spirit for ever.

Has anybody ever said to you, because of something in your lives by which you were manifestly sanctified unto God, "What mean ye by this? Why are you not like other people?" Have people ever been compelled to ask it because of the difference

between your life and theirs? Whether they have or not, give them an opportunity of asking the question. If they do not like to ask it, let them talk about it among themselves. Only, you see, the more striking the example of it is, the more are they constrained to ask what makes the difference between this one and that one. You will then have an opportunity of saying—not, "I am sanctified," but "The Lord delivered our houses, cleansed our souls, consecrated us from evil, and called us to be His, and has constrained me to obey His voice, and I am His—glory be to God."

These different stages I have mentioned are steps to heaven; and they are taken one by one. This must be the case if the Christian life is to be a full-grown life. The first thing we seek to impress upon you in the name of the Lord, is to "beseech you in Christ's stead that you be reconciled to God." And when you are reconciled to God, and know it, we implore you to be separated from all leaven. And when you are separated from all leaven, we beseech you to be sanctified to God. If you are in doubt about it, and cannot say, "Thou knowest I have given my life to Thee," just say it to Him now. Let us say it to Him now: "Thou hast bought us for Thyself by Thy precious blood, O Christ! Thou hast paid a priceless sum for us; and now we would be honest and give to Thee what Thou hast purchased for Thine own. Every one of Thy children before Thee would say to Thee now: Lord, what is Thine we would send home to the Buyer, and it shall be Thine. Lord, take this, claiming it and maintaining it as Thine own, now and ever, for Thy Name's sake. Amen."

Now, for the fourth significant token, let us look at Deuteronomy 6: 20, 21, "And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean these testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand." This is the one answer for a hundred questioners. Then, in v. 24, "And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always." When the soul has obeyed the Lord's call to be separated and sanctified to Him, then comes in the question which puzzles so many who honestly thus yield themselves to God: "Now, then, what is to be done?" Here you are! "To do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God for our good always."

In Psalm 105 you will see how strikingly this was the great purpose to God which God was working with His people all through His dealings down to this point. In v. 5 we have God's

marvellous works; in v. 8, God's covenant; in the 14th and following verses, God's dealings with His people down in Egypt; in v. 37, deliverance; in v. 39, guidance; in v. 40, food; in v. 41, water; in v. 42, remembrance of His faithful promises; in v. 43, bringing His people to the land promised them; and in v. 44, bringing them in. What is it all for? God never calls us to be sanctified in order that we may sit down and say that we are sanctified, any more than He calls us to be saved in order that we may sit down and say we are saved. The last verse in this Psalm is what God has been working to all through. The experience in your soul is not complete until you are living in that last verse—"That they might observe His statutes, and keep His laws." That is what the Lord claimed the people for Himself for.

Do not think that that is Old Testament alone. In 1 Peter 1:2 are the words, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, *unto obedience*." "Oh," says someone, "after all you are going back to legalism." It is the legalism of the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart." I wish all the legalists adopted that legalism! The legalism of the new covenant is, "I will put my laws into their hearts," so that they cannot help doing them. That is the law-keeping we want for God. "And when your children shall say, What mean ye by these testimonies and judgments? ye shall say, The Lord brought me out from Egypt, and through the wilderness, and into this land, that I might keep His statutes and His laws."

Now consider how far this obedience is intended to reach in our lives. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. And these words which I command thee this day shall be *in thine heart*" (Deut. 6: 5, 6). This is the first place. It is not any longer the tables of the law threatening you outside. These laws of God are to be in thine heart—the proper place for the root to be. It is to be a matter of love. He will make us to delight in His commandments.

Then in v. 7, "Thou shall *teach them* diligently *unto thy children*." Before these principles come to be adopted today, there will have to be a new set of principles taught in a good many schools. You Christians, who have children of your own, or the care of them, if you are sanctified Christians, will have to bring to bear upon the education of your children God's holy Word. Have you any right to complain, or any reason to wonder that children who are not taught God's Word diligently, and its principles, do not grow up in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ? The wise man tells us to "Train up a child in the way he should go, and

when he is old he will not depart from it." So that God's law is to be a sanctifying element in education. Are there some children here who have God-fearing parents, and who have been hearing God's Word from their parents' lips from their youth up? Ask your parents what they mean, and learn a lesson from them; or else send to your parents to tell them, "Father and mother, I have learned what you have shown me, and I will walk in the paths of God."

Then, again, it is to go still further: "*Talk of them* when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up." Talk about them, therefore, not at Keswick only. If your talking of them bores and wearies some of your friends, very well then, you will be rid of troublesome companions—that is all. If it does not bore or weary, then you will win better friends than you had before. Talk to yourself about them, if you have got no one else. We sometimes say, "Look at that half-witted fellow talking to himself"; but this is a talking to himself that is never amiss. If it is in the heart, it must come out of the mouth. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

Again, we are told, "Thou shalt bind them for a sign *upon thine hand*" (Deut. 6: 8). "The work of our hands, prosper Thou it." Yes, God will prosper your handiwork when His Word is bound upon your hand. This is God's Word coming in to rule your principles and conduct in the business you have to do. It is whole-hearted consecration. Do not keep it for your homes only. Let it go out. It is to be bound to your hand, so that you cannot put your hand upon anything on which God cannot bring a blessing. That is the handiwork that God will give a blessing to—"The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it." It is the principle of Christian conduct in business that it should be guided by God's Word.

Again: "And they shall be as frontlets *between thine eyes*." Do not look at the plans that you cannot see right through God's Word. Use God's Word as a veil to hide every other plan away. Again: "Thou shalt write them *on the posts of thy house*, and *upon thy gates*." They are the terms on which your house is to be ruled, and on which your friends come in—that they will be friends on the conditions in God's Word. What a wondrous thing God is calling us to! What a wondrous profession the Christian profession is! And what a mighty provision God has made for His people to live it out to His praise and glory! This is the obedience into which believers are elected through the foreknowledge of God the Father, and the sanctification of the Spirit.

One step more to the fifth, and last mark. In Joshua 4: 19,

we see the final outcome of all that this, which has gone before, is leading up to. Here is the goal in view: "And the people came up out of Jordan in the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho. And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal. And he spoke unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers"—the Lord's people are to provoke their children to ask a personal question, and they are to be ready to give a personal answer—"When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come saying, What mean these stones? Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you until ye were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up from before us until we were gone over." Why all this? Here is the answer, in the last verse: "That *all the people of the earth might know* the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty."

Why do we want to be separate from evil? Why do we want to be sanctified to God? Why do we want the life of obedience? Is it to make us happy? It *will* make you happy as nothing else will. It will make God rest in His people and be satisfied with them. But is it for you and God alone? Is it to fill the Church with songs of praise which will go up to God in heaven? The Church of Christ is not shut all round, and open only upwards. No. It is open all round, like this tent today. It is for the people outside, and the people beyond these who are outside, until all the people of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty. That is what whole-hearted obedience and practical sanctification must come to. And, brethren, that is what the Church of Christ is waiting for, and what the Lord God in heaven is waiting for, and what the poor weary earth is waiting for—the blessed story of what God is: that He is mighty to save to the uttermost.

Out of the Church that message must flow. You and I are members of the Church, and are responsible for our share in that work. What are we doing? If you curtail your obedience to a certain point, so far you cannot be a full-grown Christian. You may, like Israel, keep the blessing to yourself. Then they "waxed fat, and kicked," and were no good to God or man. But while they kept His testimonies, they did what He wanted. When they put up these stones they said, "In the name of our God we will set up our banners." Banners belong to soldiers and armies, and armies are not meant always to spend their time at home in the barracks, though this may be more comfortable than the camp. Soldiers are meant for the king's warfare, wherever

warfare is to go. Joshua put up these stones as a standing witness for all the world to what God had done.

Unless you know what God has done, you will never know what God can do. Unless you are standing on the certainty of salvation in Jesus, and in separation, sanctification, and obedience to Him, you will never be able to send out His message to the ends of the earth. The world is waiting for it, and upon us for it, today. Let us remember that that Gilgal heap of stones taught the world, as far as the world could see and hear, what the Lord had done, and what He was going to do. It told seven nations, greater and mightier than Israel, that God was going to humble them all before the Ark of His Covenant. They set up their banners there, and in the name of the Lord they triumphed. See in 1 Samuel 17: 46, why it is that David expected certain victory over Goliath: "This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand . . . *that all the earth may know* that there is a God in Israel." And again in 2 Kings 19: 19, "Now, therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech Thee, save Thou us out of his hand, *that all the kingdoms of the earth may know* that Thou art the Lord God, even Thou only."

The final purpose for which God saves His people, and sanctifies and keeps them, is this: Lift up your eyes beyond yourselves, your own blessings, and families, and churches, and let them rest out on those harvest fields to which God is pointing you, and to which He is telling you to pray that He may thrust out labourers, so that all the people of the earth may know that the Lord our God is mighty.

III

STEWARDS OF CHRIST

And He said unto His disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward—Luke 16: 1, 2.

We know at once for whom the lesson is intended—the Lord's disciples. And in a sense, the Lord's disciples are stewards in a way that those who are not the Lord's disciples are not. This, which Jesus says here, belongs to every one of us that are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. He said unto His disciples, "There was a certain rich man." You will see sometimes when the Lord is speaking to the Pharisees, He says, "There was a certain man . . ." because they had to be taught the *existence* of God; but when He speaks to his disciples He says, "There was a certain rich man," because they needed to be taught the *riches* of God. "There was a certain rich man which had a steward."

In Romans 16: 23 you find, among those from whom Paul was giving greetings, Erastus, the chamberlain of the city—or treasurer of the city. That word "treasurer" is the same as "steward": so you will see at once what a steward is. You will look upon him as a treasurer. As far as he is a treasurer, all the things he has to deal with belong to somebody else, and are to be used for somebody else; and when they have been used, an account of his stewardship is given to that somebody else who gave him those possessions. A steward, therefore, is simply and solely an agent as between a master's gifts, and the purpose for which the master means them to be used. He may only use that money as it is drawn by the master's cheques, and the moment he begins to use any of this for himself, at once he becomes a dishonest treasurer. Something is sticking to his hands that ought to be flowing from them.

Look at 1 Peter 4: 10, and you will find how far this word has to do with us—"As every man hath received the gift, even

so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." There is not a single disciple to whom this calling does not apply. They are stewards for God, who receive things from Him in order that they may use them for Him. Let us look at 1 Corinthians 4: 7, "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" Here we see that we are stewards for every single gift we possess, every form of the manifold grace of God: that is, as there are many different kinds of stewardships, and many different gifts to be stewards for, so there is some gift and some stewardship for every disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To every one of them the same thing is said, "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" We are not to think that we are not stewards because we have not what our neighbour has, but to remember that we are stewards of every single thing we have, from beginning to end, of all that we commonly call our own.

A steward is, further, one who is called to give an account, as the treasurer must be always ready to give an account to the person for whom he is treasurer. That is just the reason why we look for honest and trustworthy people to be treasurers. We expect, at a moment's notice, if we ask, "How does the treasury stand?" that he will be able to tell us. Simply because they are treasurers, it is their duty to be able at once to render an account. That is true of all God's people. They are in Christ Jesus, thank God, not called upon to give an account for the sins that are past—the Lord Jesus has paid that long ago: but they are called upon to give an account for all those things for which God makes them stewards; and for the use of all these things, they will stand at the judgment seat of Christ, for every one will have to give an account there at last, for his use of the Master's talents.

When we enquire in what way the subject may be practically applied, we shall find that a large number of lessons about stewards especially belong to those who are ministers of the Word. Let us take some of these in order. In 1 Corinthians 4: 1 we have the words: "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." So that those who are truly God-given ministers have received for their ministry the mysteries of God. In the Scriptures the word "mysteries" belongs to those things which God had kept hidden and now has revealed, and therefore they are things which were secret, but now may be known; and ministers are called stewards of those things. They may be divided into the seven great mysteries of the

Gospel, and it is the duty of the stewards to minister of these things. We are called as stewards to unveil these mysteries to those whom God has put us to minister among.

In 1 Corinthians 9: 16, 17, Paul says concerning the preaching of the Gospel: "For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel. For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, a dispensation of the Gospel is committed unto me." The word "dispensation" is "stewardship," so that there is another aspect—and a wonderful aspect—of the ministry of God's Word. They have given unto them the Gospel; and woe is unto them if they keep that Gospel for themselves, instead of using it for those for whom God has given it to them. They must, as the Gospel passes through them, taste and know of its sweetness themselves, its fragrance will pervade their own souls first; but woe to them if any portion of the Gospel, which God has given to them as stewards, is not passed on to them for whom it was given to them.

If you look at Acts 20: 24, you find the Apostle Paul speaking in the same way: "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." That was his stewardship; and his life's aim was simply to carry out that stewardship, and to do that which his Master indicated to be done. Then, once more, in Hebrews 13: 17, you find what must also come under the head of a stewardship: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls as they that must give account." Anything for which we must give account, we are stewards for. If we were not called upon to give an account, then we might say, "That is mine, and it concerns nobody what I do with it."

Here is one word both for those whom God has called to the ministry of the Church, and for those to whom they minister. That responsibility for giving an account for souls is a joint one, and the former can only give an account with joy if the latter obey their teaching—provided, of course, that their teaching is in accordance with God's Word. Therefore, we plead with you once more that you will not come now, or at any time, to listen in order that you may know and go away without acting upon it; but that you may so listen that you may know and go away as obedient disciples, to *do* what you have heard. If we have delivered to you, as far as we can, the mysteries which God has given to us, we long and desire that what we say may meet with obedient hearts, that we may give an account with gladness

and joy, and not with grief; for if we do render an account with grief, that is unprofitable for you as well as for us.

Let us, next, reach out wider and see what the things are for which we are all ministers and stewards together. "As *every man* hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." In that sense we are all ministers of God. What are these things for which we have to give an account, and for which we are stewards? Look at Matthew 12: 36, 37, "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment; for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." So you see, then, that the lips that speak and the tongue that frames the words are part of the ministry, or the stewardship which God has entrusted to us. In Psalm 12: 4 we read that "our lips are our own" is the bold cry of the godless; but in Hosea 14: 2, "We will render the calves of our lips," or "we will render our lips as calves"—that is, as consecrated offerings for the service of God—is the cry of the godly. We are to understand that God gives us our lips as He gave herds to Israel, and that He asks back as offerings the lips that He has given to us. God keep us from thinking that our lips are our own. "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth: keep the door of my lips. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer."

"For every idle word." "Idle," in its simple meaning, is "unworking." It does not follow that the cheerful, or joyous, or jocose word is idle or unworking. It may sometimes do very good work in cheering up a downcast soul. I remember meeting a soul like that, and making an effort to speak cheerful, joyous, and sometimes laughable things; and I think God used them to cheer that soul. But meanwhile He used them for quite another purpose, for another soul that heard and was looking on came by-and-by to the Lord, and afterwards said to me, "What drew me first of all to Christ was to see that a Christian can be a merry man." Therefore it does not follow that merry words are idle words. If merry words are used for God, they may do good work for Him. If we are to render account as faithful stewards, we must guard against our words being unworking words—words that do no work, or bad work.

Another matter of stewardship is found, where in Matthew 18 we read the story of the unmerciful servant. "Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant; I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me. Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant,

even as I had pity on thee?" (vv. 32, 33). You know what that mercy is. It is the mercy of forgiveness; forgiveness of fifty or five hundred pence, or of ten thousand talents: it does not matter what size the debt was. The thing He tells you here is this—that as soon as that forgiveness is your own, it is a trust for you as a treasurer, and you are to take care that you pass it on to your brethren. Pass it on everywhere—the very forgiveness of God—by telling the way of salvation, and forgiving others on the same terms as God forgave you. Oh, what a holy and glorious responsibility! The forgiveness is no longer to be hidden in my heart, but is to be shared with brothers and sisters around. "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty"—poverty in the possession of forgiveness when you do not scatter it abroad to those who need it.

Again, in Matthew 25: 19 we see in the parable of the talents that "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them." The talents in the lesson were so many gifts of money; we have taken them also in an ecclesiastical sense, and applied them to any powers of mind or body. And in this sense, every single disciple is a steward; every single disciple has some gifts, or at least one gift, to use for God. There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and so they are, in different forms, manifestations of God's Spirit. For these gifts and talents, the Lord says that when He comes again He will reckon with us. What are our talents? Well, I would rather say, what are not our talents? "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" Oh, there are so many things that we have received! He gave us "life and breath and all things." Life is a talent, and breath is a talent, and all things are talents. He gives home and happiness, and He gives love and friendship, and He gives children and relations. All these things are God's gifts. Sit still for a moment, and just put aside what you have not received. Then, when you look round for what is left, you will find that there is nothing left. What a bundle of God's gifts are here today! O God, make us to use them as talents for Thee, and may Thy pound in our hands become ten pounds, or Thy five pounds gain five others, or Thy two pounds gain two others; and may there be not one who has to say: "Here is Thy pound just as it was."

We are all stewards—we cannot avoid that—of the manifold grace of God. What, in different forms, is underlying every pleading word spoken here, is that you will begin to be honest stewards. If every believing soul here became from this day an honest steward, we should have nothing more to tell you—I

think it would all be done: but you would have a great deal to tell other people. Recognise that for the use of every single thing you have, you are responsible to God. It may seem a burden as you look at it one way; but when you take His yoke upon you, you find that "His yoke is easy, and His burden is light." Nine-tenths of the difficulties that you meet with in your life as things that burden, distress, perplex, and overcome you, just do so because you meet them as if you were your own master, and not as if the Lord was your Master. When you take this yoke of honest submission to the Lord Jesus Christ upon you, and begin to use for Him everything that you have and all you are, then you begin to find that His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

Theodore Monod once said: "We all need two conversions," and when he said that, everybody pricked up their ears to hear what he meant by this. "First of all," he said, "we need to be converted from the natural man to the spiritual man; and in the second place, we need to be converted from the spiritual man to the natural man"—until the spiritual man finds his new life and service a second nature, the burden is gone, the service is perfect freedom. That is what the Lord calls His people to; and that is what they prove in ever-growing measure, as they live as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

It is only carrying into practice what the Lord told His people in days of old, and it is what He teaches them still today. The things He gives you, He never gives you for yourselves alone. He always gives them for Himself alone; and when you see that, you see what a wonderful gift it is. In Joshua 1: 2, 3, the Lord said unto Joshua, "Go over this Jordan, thou and all this people, into the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses." The first is a gift put down before you, and the second is a gift taken up and used by you. But before He gives it like that, He puts a little condition into the lease; for in Leviticus 25: 23 He says, "The land is mine." That land was not theirs, though it was given to them; and "Ye are not your own." Though you were given certain talents, these are all to be used for God. At the best, the land could only be loaned for a little time; but the soul of Israel, that walked faithfully with God, never had need to raise a loan upon it. God gave Israel plenty for himself and his household.

The faithful steward is the rich steward. Do you not think that, as the master sees his steward faithful in that which is least, he must increase him, until the steward comes to know what was meant when it was said to the elder son, who knew so little

about the father's heart, "All that I have is thine." Oh, friends, what a stewardship! How rich God's people are, if they only knew it! There is not a single thing that the servants of the Lord need for the Lord's service, that the Lord does not hold at their disposal. Think of that! You look at the service, and then you look at yourselves, and get discouraged. Do not do that. Look at the service, and look at the Master. Join these two together, and there is no difficulty then.

Remember, the steward is only responsible to his master. "One is your Master, even Christ." Do not be servants of men. You are responsible to your Master. He tells us in His Word how to take up the responsibility, and what it shall be. Practise the habit of turning to the Master at every moment, and saying what Paul said: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" All our difficulties in the household, the Church, and the world, will be solved when the living Church of God rises up and says, as honest stewards of the manifold grace of God, "Lord, what wilt Thou have us to do? Tell us, and it shall be done!" Is it too much to ask that God's people should say, "Behold, Thy servants are ready to do whatever my Lord the King shall command"?

In Luke 12: 42, the Lord said, in answering a question asked by Peter, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?" Here are two characteristics which we must make our own, by God's grace, if we are to carry out a real stewardship. We are to be faithful, and wise. The one touches the conscience, and the other touches the head. The faithful steward will deal conscientiously with his gift, and use it altogether for the Master; and the wise steward will be careful to know exactly how the Master means him to use it. "He that winneth souls is wise." The steward must be wise to know what his master would have him do, and also be faithful to do it. If the steward is to be wise, he must study the rules of his master's household; and if he is to be a faithful steward, he must carry these out to the letter. It is a grand thing to be literal Christians; and if anybody doubts the literal inspiration of God's Word written here, just let him see it written in your lives. That is the best proof. When men see you carrying God's commands out to the letter, and God confirming to the letter the promises attached to His commands, they will have an answer that they cannot refute; and by your good works you shall close the mouths of blasphemers and other opposers, and they shall be dumb, having nothing to say.

Let us next look at 1 Peter 4: 10, "As every man has received

the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." I think we must begin with wisdom. We must know what the Master's will is, and then we must go on to be faithful; we must ever be doing honestly what the Master reveals His will to be. But there is something more He wants us to be. A good steward is one who loves his master's will, and, when he has put his head and conscience into it, puts his heart into it, too. "Heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men." That is the thing that carries you over difficulties and obstacles. It is like the lady who hunted so well; when asked how she could leap such dangerous places so safely, she replied, "By throwing my heart over first; then I have no difficulty in getting myself over afterwards." Get your hearts filled with love to the Master of the household, that you may be good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Turn next to Titus 1: 7, "For a bishop"—they had bishops in those days—"must be blameless, as the steward of God." Leaving out the bishop and coming to the flock, let us see that all who are stewards must be blameless, as much as the leader. That is something more than even wise, faithful, and good. They are to be able to show all men who ask them, that they are honestly carrying out the Master's will. They are not to give occasion of stumbling in or out of the Church—to "the Jew, the Gentile, the Church of God." I think that must mean that we are all to hold the Master's gifts loosely—yet firmly enough—so that if at any time the Master wishes us to give them back to Him, we may be ready to give them at once: all His gifts, and any of His gifts. There was a godly, holy rabbi—so the story tells us—whom God had blessed with a happy home and two bright little children. He went out to his duties to proclaim the truth of God one day, and when he came home at eventide his wife met him at the door of his house, saying, "I have a difficult case to put before you. Some time ago a friend gave me two jewels to keep and to care for, and I kept them and cared for them, and came to love them. That friend has asked me to give them back, and I do not want to. What shall I do?" "Be honest, wife," replied the rabbi, "and give them back at once." And she led him into the room and showed that his two little jewels had been asked back by the Master. Blameless, ready to give back at once, or to hold at God's disposal, His gifts.

What the steward, who was expressly taken as a lesson for the disciples, was accused of in Luke, was that he had wasted his master's goods. It does not say that he had purloined them, or misappropriated them, or hoarded them and hid them away for himself. If you look back to the preceding chapter, you see a

sad likeness between him and the prodigal son who wasted his substance in riotous living. Here is a point that God's stewards need to take great care about. There are perhaps some unfaithful stewards, even that are disciples of God, yet forget the command that they are not to be purloiners. They perhaps steal and keep for themselves things that the Master has given them to be used for Him and for His people. There are others, perhaps, who have not stolen, but have hoarded for themselves gifts that God gave them to be used for His service. I heard a curious simile for such a case only yesterday. In a little house in this place, some visitors wanted some hot water, and went down to the kitchen to get it. They found a boiler, but could get no water from it. So they said to the good woman of the house, "Is there no water in it?" "No, there is no water there." "Then what do you use it for?" "To put sticks in, to dry them before lighting the fire. The woman before used it for water; but when she wanted any, she had to scoop it out, and I don't trouble to use it. They tell me now that they make these things with taps, and you can draw as much as you like; that must be very nice." Boilers are what Christian hearts ought to be. Are there Christian hearts intended to be boilers, that are used for drying up rubbish before it is burned? Why is this? Because there is not a tap to let water out, and so there is no water going in. It is just a useless thing to keep rubbish in. So some people lose the character of being a steward, until at last they lose the power to be a steward of the manifold grace of God; turning that grace into corruption, because it is not used for God.

Remember that we are not to be wasteful stewards. That is a sad thing, and it seems to me that it touches fearfully the whole Church of Christ, of which we are here today as members. Supposing that a man gave to one of his servants an acre of ground, and abundance of seeds and plants wherewith to sow it, with every necessary implement to work it, to prepare it, to enrich and fertilise it, and then went his way, leaving his servant to use that acre for his master. The first thing the servant does is to build a fence with which he shuts off one-half of the acre, and leaves the other portion of it alone altogether. He next further divides the enclosed portion into two, sprinkles a few seeds over the larger half of what is left, and then concentrates his powers on the remaining portion of the field. He prepares the soil of the smaller of this sub-divided portion, enriches it, digs it up, and sows the first seeds. Next he waters it, and sows it over again with another set of seeds; and a little while after setting these, he begins to stick in plants, bulbs, and shrubs among them. Then he places a hot-house over all, and thinks he has done his work.

That is what the Church of Christ is doing today. There is a barrier across one half of the wide world, and the one half has not heard the name of Jesus. And the other half—what is it? Three-fourths of it is scarcely touched; and all the seed, the fertilising element, the water, and hot-houses, are on a single little one-eighth. What can happen to the seeds, but that they must choke one another? And for one seed you set, you scarcely get two back, while the whole wide field is waiting to give you a hundred-fold for every single seed you put in. Oh, Christians, we are both the sowers and the seed. Where are you sowing your Master's seed? On the top of the sowing of others? Where are you going to sow it? You young men and young women who want to be sowers of the Word—where are you going to sow? "There is a fine church, that is the place for me," you say; while just beyond there is a poor starving place that does not know the name of Christ. Paul, above all things, was careful not to build on another man's foundation. Mind that you are careful of the same thing.

Remember that we are stewards, and the Master can tell us and make us know where He wants the seed to be sown, so that when it is sown it won't be wasted. God bring us to see that, whether we will or not, if we are believers in Jesus Christ, we cannot help being stewards: that every steward should be found seeking the Master's will, and doing it. The wasteful steward, when he comes to give an account, if he is not cast out as a worthless one altogether, will at least be a shame-faced steward and will not know what to say. God, show us what it is to be "Not my own, and nothing that I have my own," and send us out as we have never been before—wise stewards, who begin to know what the Master's will is, so that they may not waste His goods; and faithful stewards, to do the Master's will; and good stewards, to do it with all their hearts; and blameless stewards, able to show before the world that their reason for doing it is, that all—from the youngest and lowest to the eldest and highest—may see that they belong to, and live for, God, and use for Him every gift He has given them. The greatest hardship need never give us a single pang, and nine-tenths of the burdens of life shall roll by harmlessly and ninety-nine hundredths of the questions of life be solved, if we are wise and faithful, good and blameless stewards of the manifold grace of God.

IV

THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

Now, in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the Word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me ; and He hath charged me to build Him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people ? The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up—2 CHRONICLES 36: 22, 23.

IF you let your eyes follow on to the next chapter and the opening verse—Ezra 1: 1—you will find that this message was so important that, when God had said it once, He immediately repeated it: the same words, with other words to follow. The story has to do with the rebuilding of the house of God; and there is no type in God's Word that is more complete and full in all its details, and more perfectly fitted to the anti-type, than the type of the temple of God in the Old Testament, as picturing the Church of God in the New Testament. In all its details—from the first plan and thought of it in the mind of God, and as it was revealed to David, from the first foundation stone to the topmost pinnacle—it was all designed and ordered of God, in order that it might be a pattern of the spiritual house which God means to have built here on earth. That temple has its anti-type three or four times over. First, in the Lord Jesus Christ, who spoke of "the temple of His body," both His body physical and His body mystical; so that it applies equally to the whole Church of Christ throughout the world. The Church of God, which is the blessed company of all His faithful people, will, when the last member has been gathered in, be in completeness the anti-type of the temple of God. It is true, also, of the single individual believer: "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost." And in its own measure, also, the Church of Christ in every generation is intended to represent before the eyes of the world the temple of God. God dwells in the midst of His people, and that constitutes them a temple of God.

That temple of God in Old Testament times passed through many vicissitudes, just as the Church of God in New Testament times has done. Coming to the time when the Book of Chronicles was written, the temple of God had passed through evil times. There had been in the days of David and Solomon the preparation and completion of the first building in all its glory. Then came by degrees decadence and disaster, backsliding, and evil of one kind and another, until the four awful abominations of Ezekiel's vision, each one worse than that which went before, were defiling the temple of God (Ezek. 8: 5–16). So at last God's judgment fell on the place where these defilements were allowed, and the temple was overthrown and utterly destroyed, and all its treasures carried to Babylon.

God intended, all the same, that there should be a temple for His glory in all ages. So there came a time when the temple was to be built again; and it was to be done, as Haggai tells us—"And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former" (Haggai 2: 7). That is the very house which Cyrus decreed to build.

When God was intending to send His Son Jesus Christ into the world the first time, He took care that, long before, a preparation should be made: a house was to be built, which should be filled with His glory in the Person of His Son Jesus Christ. It must be just the same again when the Lord comes the second time.

In the early days of the Church—in New Testament times—it was as in the days of Solomon. The temple of God seemed to be well-nigh built; as far as Paul knew, every nation seemed evangelised (Col. 1: 6). But when the wonderful, almost perfect, temple seemed to be built, there came a time of gradual decadence, and those awful middle ages of darkness, so that the temple of God well-nigh lay in a shapeless mass of ruins. We know that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming again, and before He does come again that temple must be rebuilt, and when that work is done the Lord Jesus Christ will appear in glory. This reconstruction of the temple, till it should be raised in such a form and in such glory that God could inhabit it, is a picture of what must happen to the Church of Christ before the Lord comes a second time; before the Lord comes to be glorified in His saints, just as the glory of God came to fill that house.

What were the steps that God intended to be taken? We read: "Now, in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the Word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished." God's promise lies at the root of everything that we

have a right to claim, possess, expect, and look for. This Word of the Lord, spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah, was the foundation promise on which everything was going to hinge for the Old Testament building. And we want to be very sure about God's words of promise—the word that He has spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ concerning the building of the temple before the coming of the Lord. We take but one passage out of many when we turn to Matthew 24: 14, "And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." And close by, in vv. 32–34, the parable of the fig-tree tells us that the putting forth of the leaves is one of the signs of the near approach of Christ's second coming; so that we may, like Daniel, understand "by books" that the end is close at hand—the fig-tree leaves telling us of the coming together of Israel, and their hastening back to their own land. We are to understand, like Daniel of old, that the time is close at hand; and we should, like him also, set to work upon our knees to help in its speedy coming. The indications of it must be read in God's promises; and if we have not got those, we are just on a sea of utter blank ignorance, without a compass to guide us.

I do not know whether there are souls here that are troubled by the doubts of those who suggest continually that the Bible is not the Bible, as God's inspired and trustworthy book. If there are, this is too great a subject to go into now; but just remember that here the Bible is today, though its enemies have been saying, age after age, that it would soon disappear. Sometimes they say, like Voltaire, "Just another generation, and Jesus Christ will be forgotten." There are more millions in the world that know Jesus Christ than there are, perhaps, tens that ever knew Voltaire. Sometimes the difficulty comes in because people just read the poison of the enemy, and do not take the antidote that God has provided. Age after age God has preserved His Bible, and there is in it a provision of counter-shot which can foil the enemy. Younger brothers and sisters, do not suppose, just because you have a doubt cast at you, that therefore that doubt must be right, and the Lord Jesus Christ must be wrong. Remember, in short, that we may safely say that the wisest, the most learned, and ablest scholars, age after age, have been those who, like little babes, have fallen at the feet of Jesus, and acknowledged the Bible to be His Word. And if those who tell you it is not His Word boast of their wisdom and knowledge, at least they must allow that those who do bow before God's Word have been, and are, among the wisest and most able of mankind.

There are three grounds on which sceptics take up their position. There is the historic ground, where men have denied the historic

facts of the Bible. They have been met by historians as able as themselves, proving the truth of God's Word; until now, honest sceptics have for the most part come on the side of believers, and given up their assaults on the New Testament. They have had to transfer their assaults to the Old Testament; but do not swallow all that they tell you. How far ought we to trust these men who say that the Old Testament is not God's Word? Take an example: one of the minor prophets—Jonah—appears to have been written at a certain time, and up comes a whole herd of sceptics to deny it. Of course, they can tell us when it was written if they deny the real date. Yet the date they give us in return ranges down seven hundred years! Ten men cannot agree within seven hundred years as to the time that they maintain the prophecy was written! Just stop before you believe their criticisms, until they have agreed which of their own criticisms is true; and, I assure you, if you stop till then, you will have a fine time with God's Word in the meanwhile!

Now, you cannot take out one book from the Bible, or any part of one, without pulling out its neighbour. Somehow or other God's Bibles are bound together with one great thread running through them, and if you break that thread all the leaves come out. You cannot take out one without taking out the rest; and then you have got the cover with nothing inside of it. It was on the foundation of God's promises that this temple had to be built in those days, and it is on the foundation of God's promises that what we are looking for has to be done in our days.

When the promise of God was given that this time was drawing nigh, "Cyrus made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom." The literal meaning is, "He caused a voice to pass." He caused the *heralds* to go out from land to land, making this proclamation. It is, in the Greek version, the same word that the Lord Jesus Christ uses when He tells them in the end of St. Mark that they are to go out to *preach* the Gospel to every creature. It is also the same word as is found in Luke 24: 47, and again in Romans 10: 14, "How shall they hear without a *preacher* (or herald)?" And so, here we have before us an exact picture, before the Old Testament temple was built, of what the Lord tells us is to be done before the New Testament temple is built. The proclamation is to go out throughout all the kingdom. Now, that has got to be done. It had then to go through all Cyrus' kingdom. And now of the Lord Jesus Christ it is said, "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." He it is who now ruleth in heaven and over the affairs of men; so that, thank God, if we are inclined to be troubled about things of the outside world, we know that even now the kingdoms of this world are

the kingdoms of God and of His Christ, and they are only waiting for Him to be manifested as King.

Meanwhile this voice has to go out—a voice that has received a message, and passes it on. A herald is to proclaim throughout all the world the message which the King desires to have sent on. But in case there should be any mistake about the proclamation that was made, Cyrus "put it also in writing." It was a good thing for those captives who came back from Babylon that he did put it in writing, because when they came back to set to work upon the building of the temple, they were much hindered. Scarcely had they laid the foundation when they were stopped by the adversaries. So they commenced building their own homes, and then went on to adorn them. There came one thing after another to be done, so they ceased carrying out the proclamation of the king, and the power of the kingdom ceased to support them. Interruptions came, and the enemy had the power over them, because when they pretended now and then to do a little building, and the enemy told them they were rebelling against the king, they did not point them to the writing. So the building ceased for fifteen years. By-and-by the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel and his companions; and they began to build again. When the enemy came the second time, the people said to the enemy, "We have got a written decree that the building is to be erected, and touch us if you dare."

That is what we have to lay at the root of all we are thinking of in the evangelisation of the world. We have got a written decree. I do not know whether it is possible for any to think of going out as heralds of the Gospel, and not to be confident of the writing which is their authority for going. I cannot imagine a more awful condition than to be face to face with all the power of the enemy, and when the enemy says, "What are you doing here?" instead of being able to say, "This is the writing or authority that the Lord has given me to proclaim His message, and by that I am going to be judged," to have to say, "I think I have got a book with His writing in it, but I am not quite sure where His writing begins in the book, and how much of it is His." I think the enemy would say, "You had better go home and build your own house until you know more about it."

Whoever is going out in the name of Christ for the salvation of the world, God grant them knowledge of the Word as His from beginning to end. God's Word is God's Word indeed. It is a word to be relied upon, and trusted to the uttermost. The glorious heavens above us and the earth beneath us shall pass away, but God's Word shall never pass away. It is on the ground of that written proclamation that God's temple is going to be built,

and a home prepared for the Lord to be glorified in when He comes again. God's promise is the foundation of it all. With the promise and the proclamation there is the parchment, and without the parchment you cannot get on.

Let us notice how God worked in those days. First, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, which means that He *awoke* the spirit of Cyrus. The word used to translate it in the Greek Scripture is "He raised up," and it is remarkable that this is the very word which is used over and over again about the raising of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, or wakening Him from the slumber of death, and bringing Him forth in the resurrection. It was when the Lord woke up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, that this work began to be commanded; and it was not until the Father had wakened up the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and until He was the risen Christ, that this proclamation began to be made, and His command began to be issued that His Gospel should be preached throughout all the Kingdom.

It may be that the Church of Christ has been slow to listen to and to understand, much more to obey His proclamation, because they have still been knowing Him in practical experience only as the crucified, instead of as the risen Saviour. They do not hear the risen Saviour's voice because they do not know Him as the risen Saviour; and multitudes of them, who know that their sins were taken by Christ into the grave, have not received the Lord Jesus Christ as one raised from the dead to be King, and as having given the commandment that His Gospel should go out to all the ends of the earth. When God raised up the spirit of Cyrus, he said, "All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me"; and when God awakened Jesus Christ from the dead, Christ said, "All power in heaven and on earth is given me." These two sentences are almost word for word. The kingdoms are Christ's now. Authority over all heaven and all earth is given to the risen Saviour; but apparently it was not given until He was the risen Saviour.

With that power behind Cyrus, and at his disposal, see now what he is told to do. "And He hath *charged* me to build Him an house in Jerusalem." That word "charged" is elsewhere translated "given me the oversight," or "He hath set me over the work." In 2 Chronicles 34: 10, it is said: "And they put it in the hand of the workmen that *had the oversight* of the house of the Lord." And v. 12 states, "And *the overseers* of them were Jahath . . ." This is a picture of what the Lord Jesus Christ is to us now. He is One whom the Father has made overseer of the work of building the House of God. When we see a fine public building that perhaps a generous citizen has presented

to his town, we say that that wealthy man built that structure. By-and-by the architect comes, and says, "I built that." And the builder comes, and says, "I built it." And the stonemasons come, and say, "We built that."

Yes, we are all builders; and the Father is the great Master of us all, who gives the power, and the rights, and all that is needed for the building. The Lord Jesus Christ is the great Architect of His own house, and He is the great Layer of the foundation-stone, too. The labourers include in their numbers every single soul that knows the Lord Jesus Christ, who has the oversight of the building. It is not enough to have the great Master of it all. It is not enough to have the Architect with a perfect plan in His mind, and on His parchments. There must also be the workmen; and the Master makes Himself dependent upon them. "The head cannot say to the foot, I have no need of thee." And so the Master asks, "Where are you that I have need of?" They must not be what Mr. Moody calls "Noah's builders"—men who are not members of God's household. For in Ezra 4: 2 you see that "They came to Zerubbabel and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you." And Zerubbabel answered, "Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God." It is the Lord's people only that can be the Lord's builders; and, of course, they must know that they are the Lord's people. You find in Ezra 2: 59 that there were some of them who "could not show their father's house, and their seed, whether they were of Israel." I suppose they had to sit by and watch, and could do nothing else, because none but the Lord's people might be builders there.

The Lord's people, though they are a small company compared with the world, are a large company compared with the builders that are at present engaged in the building; and so the Lord is calling out today, "Who is there among you of all His people?" He calls for volunteers; and when they have been found, He says, "The Lord his God be with him." This is what the Lord Jesus Christ said: "Go ye into all the world," and "Lo, I am with you alway." Cyrus prayed for the fulfilment of this promise; and the Lord Jesus Christ is manifested out there where the builders are at work, in a power in which He cannot be seen where His people are not so much occupied with the building.

Mr. Hudson Taylor said some years ago, that there are some things in the knowledge of God which perhaps cannot be known till you get out to China, and it is worth going out to China to know them. If the Lord gives you the promise that, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest

through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee"—if you sit here in perfect peace and safety, not in the waters, and simply looking at the fire, what can you know of the fulfilment of the promise? It is when you get into the fire, and are passing through the waters, that you feel His hand. There is a power to be expected and to be known, that God will show out there in the place of toil, where He has promised to be with them, which will not be known by those who are not out there. All who respond to this call are perfectly sure that they are the Lord's people, and are of the Lord's preparing; they can look for, and know with confidence that the Lord's presence will go with them. "The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem."

If you want to find what Jerusalem means for you, it will be elsewhere than here at Keswick. Some will find Jerusalem in America, some in China, some in India, some in Africa, and some in the islands of the sea. It is wonderful the size of Jerusalem just now. It is all over the world. I do not know where Jerusalem is not. It is like Bethel, the house of God. Every place is Bethel, if you have got God with you in every place. He says, "Go up into the mountains and hew down wood, and into the quarries and get out stones; and wherever you are set to work, the Lord your God will be with you."

I have long wondered what the meaning for God's people was to which the Psalmist refers when he talks about "turning again the captivity of His people." We have it referred to in Psalms 14: 7; 85: 1 and 126: 1. In the last-mentioned psalm it reads, "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion." The Lord turned their captivity, and then showed them what was the work that was before them. And as they responded to the call, it was no wonder that they said, "Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing." The best reason for God's people to laugh and sing is when they see the captivity of the Church to its own selfish ends turned, and the house of God being built in real earnest. "Then said they among the heathen, the Lord hath done great things for them."

There are some whose ears are open to hear the call. They go; and when they get to Jerusalem, it is just in the same condition that it was at the time of the prophet Haggai—"Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." The Lord's house is really only being built when it is being done according to the Lord's plan; and however much we may set ourselves to be building in Jerusalem, and close by the temple of God, it is not building the Lord's house, unless it is being done on the

Lord's principles and plans. Is this not the case with thousands of God's people today? They have heard of the turning again of the captivity of God's people. They see the Gospel being borne to the uttermost parts of the earth. They are even singing about it, and are expecting it to be done. But just as they themselves are setting to work, they say, "The time is not quite come," and then they begin to look at their own houses and say, "But if these men go out, what will happen to us at home?" Why, friends, you will be obeying the Lord at home; but if these do not go out, you will not be obeying the Lord at home.

The Lord's people do not seem to see that the most wonderful secret of blessing is the secret of complete obedience. It has been well said that "The best commentary on the Bible is obedience." "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." Instead of these people building the Lord's house, they have taken to building their own houses. And the Lord has said, "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?" One part of it not even touched, and not apparently thought of yet! Someone, speaking a little while ago of some awful death in Liverpool, said, "Fancy sending out to the heathen when we have got these heathen at home!" Someone else wrote a letter to the papers, and said that the Christian Churches were sending to the heathen abroad one out of every 5,000 communicants at home, and that surely the 4,999 remaining could well undertake the work at home if they were willing to do it.

Is it time for you to dwell in your cieled houses when so great a portion of the wide world is lying waste? As ministers of the Gospel, as Bible-women, as district helpers, as Sunday-School teachers, as colporteurs, and all sorts of things, we say we have sown much, and bring in little; we eat, and we have not enough; we drink, and we are not filled with drink; we clothe ourselves with the rich garments of God's Word, and yet we are not warm; and we earn wages, to be put into a bag with holes; and the Lord says, as plainly as can be said, "Consider your ways. Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it" (Hag. 1: 7, 9). Is that the reason why there is so little blessing at home?—because the Lord blows upon it; because we are not obeying Him, and not working on His lines? If, instead of blowing upon it, the Lord were to bless it because His people served Him, and nine out of every ten went out, the tenth at home would do ten times as much as before. You pray for dew from heaven and for showers, and you get a drop now and then—a poor return of result compared with the labour, because you are not working on God's lines. But when the people obeyed Him, God did something which we may ask and expect Him

to do now. Haggai 1: 14 reads, "And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, and the spirit of Joshua, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people." This is the fullness of the Holy Ghost; the baptism of the Spirit. Do you want to know how the evidence of this filling of the Holy Ghost was seen? It was seen thus: "They came and did work in the house of the Lord of Hosts, their God, in the fourth and twentieth day of the sixth month"—or, as we may say, on the nine-and-twentieth day of the seventh month; that is, in the tent this morning.

Who is there among you that wants to get the blessing? In Haggai 2: 18 we read, "Consider now from this day and upward . . . from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid"—in order to set to work at the superstructure—"consider it." Then in v. 19, "Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth"—there in the cloudless heavens and on the dry earth, the Lord says, "from this day will I bless you."

Will you have that blessing? Which is there among you, of all the Lord's people, that want that blessing? "The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up." I cannot tell you where your Jerusalem may be; but the Lord can, and will. The one thing that God wants, that the Church wants, that the world wants, and that the heathen at home want, is that the Church of God should be builded out of souls brought to Christ from every nation under the sun. And if there be some, for any cause whatever, that are intended to remain in the place where they are now, let them just glance as we close at Ezra 1: 4, "And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the man of his place help him"—or lift him up—"with silver and with gold and with goods and with beasts." Whatever you have got that can be of use to those who go down to the battlefield, be ready to give for their use. By-and-by the rewarding time will come, and the rule of King David will hold good. When the four hundred came back and wanted to reserve all the spoils for themselves, David made an ordinance which should stand for ever, that "As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff; they shall part alike."

"He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward," and he that lifts up God's missionary children from his own place, with silver and gold, or whatever he hath need of, and, above all, with the blessed incense of prayer, in the glorious day of victory shall share alike with them in the prize of the Lord.

II

GRACE AND PEACE IN FOUR PAULINE EPISTLES

by

Prebendary H. W. Webb-Peploe, M.A.

1902

PREBENDARY WEBB-PEPLOE

Keswick was richly endowed with greatly gifted personalities in its earlier days. The leaders and speakers were men of outstanding calibre—to recall the names of Harford Battersby, Evan Hopkins, Charles A. Fox, Hubert Brooke, Handley Moule, Elder Cumming, and—somewhat later—F. B. Meyer, is enough to justify such a claim. And among them, Preb. H. W. Webb-Peploe occupied a foremost place from the inception of the Convention for forty years. He attended the initial gatherings of 1875 as a visitor; stepped into the breach in the emergency caused by the withdrawal of Mr. Robert Pearsall Smith, and became the principal speaker at that historic Convention —and continued to play a prominent part for four decades.

A man of impressive presence—he had been a brilliant athlete at Cambridge—Webb-Peploe exercised a remarkable ministry, over the same period, at St. Paul's, Onslow Square, Kensington, at that time an influential church in a fashionable suburb in the West of London. A character-sketch of him in *The Christian* in 1885 referred to his "vigorous and strongly marked personality," and proceeded: "As a public speaker his gifts are so extraordinary as to be unique. For rapidity of utterance, perhaps the only other Englishman who has excelled him was one of his own predecessors at St. Paul's. . . . This extreme fluency is often a drawback to hearers whose mental processes are somewhat sluggish; all the more as Mr. Webb-Peploe's addresses are characterised by close and somewhat intricate trains of reasoning, and his phraseology is by no means of a hackneyed or commonplace order. . . .

"He is best known to the general public," the article proceeds, "as a speaker at meetings held 'for the deepening of the spiritual life.' The annual conferences at Keswick on this subject would to many lose more than half their charm and influence if the clear-cut, thoughtful features and penetrating utterances of Mr. Webb-Peploe were not to be seen and heard."

He was, then, one of the leading speakers at Keswick before Bible Readings were first given in 1881. As we have seen, the Rev. Hubert Brooke exercised that particular ministry almost exclusively until 1886, when he was first absent through illness. Webb-Peploe gave one Reading, however, in 1882, and shared this ministry with other speakers in Mr. Brooke's absences, until such time as *two* series were delivered annually, when he took an ever-increasing share, finally becoming almost the peer of Hubert Brooke. He never limited his ministry to the Bible Readings, however, as Mr. Brooke did, but was a principal speaker at other Convention meetings also.

There are veterans who can still recall his tall figure and vibrant voice—for his bow abode in strength until 1914, when he delivered his final series of Bible Readings—and all speak of him with profound respect. A patrician of the old school, he was somewhat austere; but as a speaker, he held his vast audiences enthralled by his torrential oratory. His Bible Readings were unlike any others at Keswick, then or since. Without a note, he would range over the entire Scriptures, quoting copiously from memory—always correctly, and with chapter and verse; and diverging frequently into the alluring side-issues his alert mind suggested to him. For this reason, his addresses seem somewhat tortuous to read: but his burning conviction, deep love of the Lord and His Word, and passionate desire to lead his fellow-believers into the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ, illuminate and shine through all he said.

Of the many series of Bible Readings which the Prebendary delivered, almost any set could be selected as representative; these on four of the Pauline Epistles, given in 1902, are his first series with a connected theme—indeed, they are his nearest proximation to the Bible Readings of today.

I

GRACE AND PEACE IN THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

I PROPOSE to offer a brief summary of four epistles by St. Paul which seem to have special reference to the spiritual life; and take them consecutively as the Holy Ghost has provided them for us, viz.: the Epistles to the Galatians, the Ephesians, the Philippians and the Colossians. These I understand to be special teachings of the Holy Ghost for spiritual men and women, whereby they may be inducted into all the privileges and possibilities of a true Christian life.

While we may appear to be neglecting the preliminary epistles, I think you will see ere long the special reasons for that. I think we might summarise the reasons by saying that in the Romans we have that which I will allude to as the Pauline Gospel, in its special magnificence: the length, breadth, depth, and height—the Pauline Gospel of a full, free salvation, provided for us in the Lord Jesus Christ, as before God and against our enemies; while the details with reference to the life that should be lived are dealt with in the twelfth and following chapters.

In the First Epistle to the Corinthians, we have terrible evils referred to one by one, which the apostle grieves to find even in the Church of God. In the second epistle, he tells them how they ought to apprehend the magnificence of the grace of God, for in that epistle we have more of the grace of God than perhaps in almost any other writing of the Apostle Paul. But then he turns, in the Epistle to the Galatians and onwards, to deal with the lives of spiritual men as they ought to be lived in the power of that Gospel which he has already set forth in Romans and Corinthians.

In these four epistles, we seem to have four different representations of that which is so precious to every true Christian—I mean, the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ; and need I say that I have nothing to present but Jesus Christ the Lord? May I offer you the words of Luther, in the preface to his commentary on the Galatians? He says, "In my heart this one article reigneth, even the faith of Christ, from whom, by whom, and unto whom all

my divine studies, day and night, have recourse to and fro continually." I would thankfully and humbly echo those words, and say that I desire to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ and Him crucified; I desire to set before you nothing but the magnificent Person of my Lord, my Master, my Saviour, my Friend; and to make known, as far as may be, the unsearchable riches of Christ. As John Bradford said, "Christ, nothing but Christ."

Taking these four epistles, which present to us Christ Jesus the Lord in four different aspects, I propose, first, to look at Him in the Epistle to the Galatians, as Christ *our Deliverer—from*; in the Epistle to the Ephesians, as Christ *our Leader—with*; in the Epistle to the Philippians, as Christ *our Life—in*; and in the Epistle to the Colossians, as Christ *our Head—to*.

The four different prepositions will be observed: *from*, *with*, *in*, *to*; and they characterise the four epistles. They exhibit to us the Lord Jesus Christ, first as Christ our deliverer—*from* what? From the law, in all its hurtful powers. Christ in the Epistle to the Ephesians, *with*—what shall we understand by that? He is the Christ with whom we draw nigh to God, and are placed in a position of privilege and power in the heavenlies. In the Epistles to the Philippians, we have Christ *in* whom we live and for whom we should carry on the race and battle of life, who is therefore our mighty power by which we live to the glory of God in this world. In the Epistle to the Colossians, we have Christ as the Head of the body, *to* whom the members will naturally submit themselves.

The result of these thoughts is that through the Epistle to the Galatians we are led into liberty, through the Epistle to the Ephesians we are led into peace, through the Epistle to the Philippians we are led into joy, and through the Epistle to the Colossians we are led into obedience.

What a grand life it would be if we were walking in the liberty that is offered to us here, in the wonderful peace provided for us in the heavenlies, if we knew what it is to have joy unspeakable and full of glory every hour, even when placed in trial like the apostle at Rome, when he wrote the Epistle to the Philippians. And what would it be if obedience were given to Christ as the Head of the body, as exhibited to us in the Colossians. The very world would marvel at the power exhibited, and God would indeed be glorified in His saints. This is what we aspire to, I hope.

Now let us read the first five verses of the Epistle to the Galatians. "Paul, an apostle (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead); and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of

Galatia: grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world [or *dispensation*, or *age*], according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

It will be observed that this desire of St. Paul on behalf of his Galatian converts is that they should enjoy the grace and peace of God the Father, and of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the same in each of our four epistles. He has but the one prayer to offer, the one desire on behalf of his children in the Faith: that God would communicate to them grace and peace. I ask your careful attention to this, because it summarises each epistle; for I understand that St. Paul is seeking to exhibit to these different churches the magnificence of God's provision which He offers—grace and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Need I say that these two words are all-comprehensive—grace meaning the free, unmerited favour of God offered and presented to men in and by His Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and peace, the spiritual blessing that can be enjoyed when we advance into our true position in and by our Lord Jesus Christ. So that the apostle is offering for each of these churches one comprehensive aspiration of prayer, that they may know the full blessing offered to us by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the peace that results therefrom.

But I need not say that in these two words there are elements. Hence, as the apostle deals in these Epistles with distinctly separate subjects, we understand that we are looking upon different sections of the grace of God, and of the peace that results therefrom. And as our own lives are divided, moment by moment, into portions each of which has a different need—a need of grace for some particular trial, a need of peace under some particular circumstances—we shall find that the apostle brings out from these two expressions, grace and peace, all the different provision given by God in His Son Christ Jesus for our needs in the sight of God.

Now passing to the Epistle to the Galatians, we have to consider, first, the basis on which the apostle proceeds to write to them; that is to say, the position which he considers that these converts have already attained to, and because of which he feels himself justified in making certain demands upon them.

In this Epistle we have certain key-words, which it is essential for us to notice. The first are the words *received*, and *receive*. These words are most important, because we are dealing with the subjects of grace and peace, and the apostle reckons that they have received already from God everything that really is required to

make them fully participate in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the peace of God.

Look, first, at 1:9. There you will see that the apostle says that if anybody attempts to offer them any other gospel—which is not another gospel, but a sham gospel—than that which they have received, he is to be accounted accursed. Now the Gospel in the first thing that they had received, and it is that which I consider to be Paul's Gospel as summed up in the Epistle to the Romans. If you would therefore understand what St. Paul considers them to have received, you must study carefully the Epistle to the Romans—the doctrine of man's absolute fall and ruin; the doctrine of man's hopelessness in this condition; the doctrine of God's comforting provision of righteousness, peace, life and power in Christ Jesus; the doctrine of man's position in Christ when he has accepted the Gospel; and the doctrine of the power that results therefrom, so that a man may live to the glory of God.

Have you and I received this Gospel? The word used here for *received* means that from the side of the Giver there has been the offer made to anyone who has need of a gift, and it lies at the receiver's door to take or reject it. The Lord Jesus Christ has surely been offered to us in such a way that we may all of us be said to have received the Pauline Gospel.

But we have not only, like the Galatians, received the Pauline Gospel. Pass to 3: 2, and you will see that Paul says they have received the Spirit. "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" We have received the Spirit. It is idle for men to think that they do service to God when they kneel down and plead with God to send the Spirit from heaven. That Holy Spirit has been given once for all. As Christ was given to the world as the Saviour, the Holy Ghost has been given as the Comforter and the life of the Church, and it is vain for men to imagine that they can shirk their responsibility by pleading with God that He would send His Holy Spirit from heaven. He has done His part; let man do his.

In the same chapter, v. 14, you will find the apostle saying, "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Then he goes on in the next verse to say that this is the covenant of God for the Galatians; and I think we must take our place with them. Not only do we receive the Gospel and the Spirit as a gift, but also, through the Spirit, the covenant of promise, or the promise of the covenant—whichever it is right to say, for it means the same thing—namely, the

unspeakable, certain assurance of God that He will bestow upon Abraham through his seed, which is Christ (v. 16), all the blessings that even the great high God can pour out from heaven. Therefore there is nothing to be found in God which He will not communicate to man where man can possibly receive it from his Maker; and these benefits come as a covenant of assurance which even God cannot touch or break, if he desired—and He could not desire it.

And, says the apostle, we are the promised seed if we believe in Christ. Look at 3: 29, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." That makes us, then, receivers of the covenant, which comes to us through the Spirit, by Christ Jesus, from the Father.

But, further, in 4: 5 we have received "the adoption of sons"—that is to say, we have passed into the position of sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty, who are spoken of in 2 Corinthians 6, and we may claim as children, from the Father, whatsoever we desire, not only what we need. It is not often that children plead with their parents for what they need. Parents love to give their children what they need, and to make provision beforehand for their needs. But children go to their father with their own little desires, which are almost irrespective of their needs; and the parents long to give what the children wish for, if it be for their good. So the most high God delights to give His sons and daughters whatsoever they will come to Him for, when they say "Abba." The little one says "Abba," and the grown-up says "Father."

And so we have received, says the apostle, all these benefits. Is it any wonder that when he came to a body of heathen idolaters who were worshipping the creations of their own hands, and told them of all these wonderful privileges and blessings provided for them in the Son of God—is it any wonder that they should receive Him?

In 4: 14 you find another word, which means receiving from the side of the taker—the eager putting out of the hand, as it were, the yearning of the heart toward the Giver. The apostle says, "Ye received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus." Do we not remember how, when the messenger of the Lord of Hosts came to us, and by the grace of God turned us from idols to take Christ Jesus as our Lord, we looked upon him as the angel of God, verily as being a representative of Christ Jesus Himself? Such was the first thought of these Galatians toward the apostle Paul when they received the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The apostle passes on to say that the result of this reception of Christ was liberty; and this word *liberty* is another key-word

of this epistle. He says that there were certain people (2: 4) who desired to spy out their liberty which they had in Christ Jesus, and to bring them again into bondage. Then, he says—and this is the key-text of the whole epistle: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (5: 1). Then he tells them to remember that, "Ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (5: 13).

There you have the result of the reception of the Gospel offered to you in and by Christ Jesus the Lord, taken according to the measure of your faith. And was there not a time in the experience of us all also when we entered indeed into liberty; there was a liberty of joy, a liberty of access, a liberty of power and of speech that was to us a remarkable fact?

Now, says the apostle, using a third key-word, "You seem to be in danger of being brought into bondage." That is the next key-word of this epistle. In 2: 4 he says that there are certain people coming in "to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage." Then in 4: 3 he says, "When we were children we were in bondage under the elements of the world"; and in v. 5, "To redeem them that were under the law, that ye might receive the adoption of sons." Mark that. There were certain people coming to spy out their liberty and bring them into bondage, and those Galatians had got so far away from Christ that they desired again to be in bondage. Then in vv. 24 and 25 we read of "Sinai, which is Agar, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children." In 5: 1 he challenges them with one of his marvellous *therefores* which are the turning points in every epistle of St. Paul. "Stand fast *therefore* in the liberty wherewith Christ had made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

Now, will you ask yourself what could have brought men who had once been in such a glorious privilege of liberty, into any condition of bondage. The answer is, that some had come among them and taught that they must not claim perfect liberty by faith; they must not flatter themselves that the righteousness of God which was in Christ Jesus was so completely attributed to and imparted to them—mark the two points—as to set them completely free from the law; but that though they might claim liberty from penalty, as due to the position of sinners, they must not think that they were free from the requirements of law in order to please God in their Christian life. Hence the apostle is showing them now that when these men came and taught that

they must go under the law in order to please God, they were losing completely the true liberty wherewith Christ had made them free.

Martin Luther, in his commentary on the Galatians, says in the preface that there are several kinds of righteousness. There is civil righteousness, which kings and princes enforce; there is ceremonial righteousness, which parents lay upon their children, and rightly lay upon them, so that they may keep the rules of the house; there is commandment righteousness, which is that which men imagine they must fulfil in order to please God. But there is Christian righteousness, which alone can satisfy God, and alone can give peace and power to men. Civil righteousness is the law of the land; ceremonial righteousness is the law of the home; commandment righteousness is the law of Sinai. Christian righteousness is the law of liberty—and into the law of liberty we are inducted by the righteousness of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. We are inducted into this marvellous liberty of the law of love, which empowers for every service not by compulsion of enactment, but by the constraining of gratitude, which enables men and women to be far more beautiful than the legal observer of enactments from Sinai—for men can never fulfil the demands of that law. But, as the apostle says here, we have in Christ Jesus such marvellous liberty that we become able to keep that which we dreaded before, and to glorify God at every point.

Now, what was the danger which beset the Galatians specially? It was that certain false brethren, as he calls them, had come among them—not outsiders, not people who held a totally different creed, but men who claimed to be under the aegis of Christ Jesus, men who claimed to be participators in the Gospel. The apostle says boldly that they are false brethren. We, too, are being sorely troubled by those who are enforcing upon us ceremonial law, ritual enactments, compulsory observances.

Says the apostle, I am afraid that you will observe months, and times, and seasons; you have taken to ceremonials again; you have taken to observances which you were forced from altogether as enactments. He does not blame the things, but he says they have taken to them as if they helped their souls to God, and that these things would only bring them into bondage. If taken as a means of justification, or of the continuance of justification, by righteousness and service, these things would not help, but would only prevent them from the enjoyment of the liberty which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I shall speak as a friend to many when I ask, Were there not days when some of you rejoiced in the liberty that is in Christ

Jesus with unspeakable delight; but gradually there came over your soul and life a dullness and stagnation that you could not understand? And then it may be that, like these Galatians, you were bewitched by those who said, "Go oftener to the sacrament, perform certain deeds and rites and ceremonies, and you will find that will bring you back into peace"—and the liberty wherewith Christ had made you free passed sadly away from your existence, and you came into bondage bitter and painful. It is so with many, I believe. They are Christians, they are believers, they have received righteousness at the Cross once, but the righteousness that follows, the living power of the righteousness that comes from the Cross through the Resurrection is not any longer known by them; and with heartache and a manifest lack of power, they have come to cry, "O my God, what can be done? How may I get the true liberty wherewith Christ would make me free?" The answer now is this: We must do what the apostle Paul bids the Galatians do; we must come back to the Cross of Christ, which is the key-thought of this epistle.

Will you mark how he gives us the Cross here as nowhere else. In 2: 20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Is that your faith in Christ, that He did love you and gave Himself for you individually, that He did take you to the Cross and put you there, and that the old ceremonial law, together with—in one sense—the civil law and the commandment law, has been crucified, so that you are dead to the law in this sense, that you may live unto God in and by Christ Jesus? With Him crucified, you are set free from the law that you may not only be justified officially, judicially, positionally, but may experimentally walk in the righteousness of Christ.

Secondly, if you turn to 5: 24, you find the apostle saying, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." That is the second department of man's being that troubles him. First there is the self-nature, and secondly there are the motions of the flesh within, which tempt the man to sin; and they must be put upon the Cross.

I know almost nothing so painful as putting the flesh upon the Cross of Christ; the flesh with all its natural desires and with its yearnings and cravings, its appetites and tastes. But it must be done; and the apostle declares that this has to be done by the man himself, deliberately. The flesh must be put upon the Cross of Christ, and there so nailed that it cannot get free. Liberty by crucifixion—that is liberty indeed, for any man who has found himself under the cursed power of the flesh with its desires.

Thirdly, in 6: 14 we read, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." O, my sisters, who love your jewels; my brothers, who love your banker's book, men and women with your divers ambitions: beneath the Cross of Jesus let the grave be dug, and there hurl them all. Have done with these ambitions, tastes, and desires. You love society with that taste and desire which was expressed very painfully and strikingly by one who said, "Yes, I hope for heaven, but you know there are certain tastes and pleasures here which will never be provided for us in heaven; why should I not have some of them on earth?" O beloved, I do not ask that God should give me a little toy that costs a halfpenny, when I have grown into the dignity of manhood. Surely, if I am in Christ Jesus at the Cross, with all its riches and benefits, I shall not dally with the trifles of earth, and ask my God to give me them. There is something far better provided for me, if I am crucified with Christ.

Then go back to 3: 1, and see what the apostle teaches: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?"—who hath done this for any of us, that we should desire anything instead of that glorious privilege provided for us in Him—"that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you?" There He hangs. Come back to the proper position—

> Beneath the Cross of Jesus
> I fain would take my stand . . .

and as I gaze on Christ crucified, there comes to me such a power as nowhere else can be obtained: a power that frees me from the law, and brings me to the liberty that is in Christ.

And then the last word. Fifteen times in this Epistle to the Galatians do you read of the Spirit of God and His marvellous workings, and twice of the spirit of man. I am set free by Christ that I may walk in the Spirit, be led by the Spirit, live in the Spirit. Then by the grace of God men shall see the *fruit* of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: "against such," thank God, "there is no law."

II

GRACE AND PEACE IN THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

We are to pass now from the Epistle to the Galatians to the wondrous Epistle to the Ephesians. I will ask you to read the first four verses, that we may set the key-thought before our minds. "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love."

It would not be profitable to enter now upon that vexed question as to the special intention with which this Epistle was written by St. Paul—that is, whether it was specifically addressed to the Ephesian Church, or whether it was intended to be an epistle circular to the whole of the Churches of Asia Minor. The main question is whether it is to be identified with that epistle to the Laodiceans of which St. Paul speaks in Colossians 4: 16; for, if it were, then we have, side by side, the epistles which St. Paul bids the Colossians study, and which he tells the Laodiceans to study. But with us the main point is not the designation of the epistle, but its subject matter; and I think that if someone wants to question whether this epistle was written by the direct inspiration of God, if he were honest and studied it for himself, he would be compelled to recognise the direct teaching of God the Holy Ghost.

Every writing that is called God-breathed, or God-inspired, has, of course, its special message and intention; and every one of the writings that make up the Book called the Bible is filled with teaching from God Himself to our souls. But most of us will recognise that in this Epistle to the Ephesians we have the very highest, the most magnificent, of all the fields for study wherewith God in His mercy has provided us. It may well be entitled, as it has been, the "Alps of the New Testament," because herein

we are bidden by God to mount step by step, until we reach the highest possible point where man can stand, even in the presence of God Himself, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and there, from the highest tops of the spiritual mountains, to contemplate the majesty, the power, the glory of God.

I do not know any writing in the Bible that is so wondrously full. Let me offer you words of Coleridge in his *Table Talk*. He says, "The Epistle to the Ephesians is one of the divinest compositions of man. It embraces every doctrine of Christianity —first, those doctrines peculiar to Christianity, and then those precepts common to it as natural religion." Once again, I offer you words of Adolph Monod. He says, "The Epistle to the Ephesians embraces in its brevity the whole field of the Christian religion. It would be difficult to name any great doctrine or any special essential duty which has not its place marked in this Epistle." There is perhaps no writing in the Book of God so majestic and so wonderful; and, therefore, how impossible it is for any man, as a messenger even from God Himself, to do justice to it in the space allotted to us! I hope we may draw nigh to it, simply seeking for teachings upon holiness, teachings by which we may be sent forth to live a nobler and higher life than hitherto, and by which we may be enabled to glorify God.

How wonderful is the transition from the Galatians to the Ephesians. In the Galatians we were brought face to face with the Cross of Christ, and there we stood on a separating point between the old and new life; and we learned how, through the Cross of Christ, there was to be a transition from the bondage of the law into the liberty of the Gospel. But the whole teaching of the epistle was connected with the Cross. The moment we pass into the Epistle to the Ephesians, we have done, as it were, with this, for the Cross of Christ is only mentioned once in this epistle, and that incidentally in 2: 16, where we are told how by virtue of the blood of the Cross, Christ Jesus has secured salvation for us.

Instead of this, we are taken to the heights of glory and there bidden to realise the high position of privilege and possibility accorded to every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. The whole conception is different from that of the Epistle to the Galatians. There our thoughts were exercised completely with man's only, and in one sense, proper bondage to law, and with the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, so that we are set at ease with regard to the pains and penalties and powers of the law, which hitherto had been terrifying and distressing to the soul.

But in the Epistle to the Ephesians we pass into life. While liberty is blessed, liberty without life would be of no profit to any man. We here learn that the purpose of God was not simply

to set man free so that there should be no charge against him, but we learn how that freedom is to be known, exercised, and enjoyed at all times.

So the key-thought of this epistle is, as one writer said, *Glorified in Christ.* And yet I think that that expression is not sufficient as a definition of the real key-thought of this epistle. I would venture to say that if you wish to discover the key-thought of the epistle, you must study closely every line, and, indeed, every word, of the first half of the epistle; and then, coming to the turning-point—which is always to be found in St. Paul's writings with the word *therefore*—you are called, at the opening of the fourth chapter, to begin to walk worthy of such a vocation as that which you have received in the first three chapters. So that the first half of the epistle is concerned with our calling, and the second half with the walk that proceeds from and exhibits the power of the calling.

In order to understand what really is that calling, we must look a little closer into the first half of the epistle, and find for ourselves what is the position accorded to every believer in Christ Jesus our Lord. And need I say again that, with regard to each of these four epistles, we are concerned intimately and only with the Lord Jesus Christ? "I am the way, the truth, and the life," He says; "no man cometh unto the Father but by me," and we are coming in this epistle to the Father.

Hence, when we say that Christ is our life, as St. Paul says in Colossians 3: 4, we must remember, if we would understand the meaning of that life, all that is now to be set before us in the first half of this epistle—*Christ our life*; for, though we are now dealing with the prepositions, the preposition *by* in Galatians, and now of the preposition *with*, we must not forget that in each of the four epistles the real central preposition is *in* Christ Jesus. No fewer than twelve times in the first chapter of this epistle, and eleven times in the second, besides several more in the later chapters, do we find that striking preposition *in*, as conveying to us the key-idea of the whole Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There are seven passages in the first three chapters, where we find the expression *in whom*, and you will see at once the marvellous treasures that are laid up for us in Christ Jesus our Lord. In 1: 7, "In whom we have redemption through His blood"—the foundation thought of everything. In 1: 11, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." In 1: 13, "In whom ye also trusted, after ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation;" and, in the same verse, "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were

sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." In 2: 21, "In whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." And in 2: 22, "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Finally, in 3: 12, "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him." I venture to say that in those seven expressions connected with the words "in whom"—that is, Christ Jesus our Lord—you have such a magnificent field for contemplation as might engage us all our lives.

"In Christ Jesus" is therefore the key-thought of this, as of every other, epistle written by St. Paul. But while this is true, notice the totally different tone that is conveyed by the Epistle to the Galatians and the Epistle to the Ephesians. It is a question not of death, but of life. There, the tone of thought was to *die*; here, the tone of thought is to *live*: there, the tone was crucifixion unto death; here, the tone is resurrection and ascension in all their powers, so that we are lifted into the life that is before God —but while it is life, we must never forget that it is life in Christ Jesus alone.

Further, you will notice that this is directly according to the purpose and power of God. Nowhere, I suppose, in the whole Scripture have we such a wonderful picture of the purpose and predestination and power of God as in the opening chapter of this epistle; and while that subject has vexed and tried the souls of many who are feeble in faith, or in doubt as to their own position before God, it is a doctrine of unspeakable comfort to the true believer, because it lifts us into the assurance of favour with God, and engenders gratitude in the soul of the man who rightly appreciates what God the Father, the source and giver of life, has planned for him.

Now I want you to look at this expression, "according to," and it may be a rather startling fact to some who have not closely studied the epistle to find that no less than ten times is the expression found here. That again, if closely studied, will furnish you with a field of meditation to the close of life. Shall we take them as they follow on, and see how marvellously they display the mercy of God?

In 1: 5, "According to the good pleasure of His will." 1: 9, "According to the good pleasure which He hath purposed in himself." 1: 11, "According to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." 1: 19, "According to the working of His mighty power." In 2: 2 you have a sad one, where you are brought face to face with your former life and what it was—that it was a life lived "according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the

children of disobedience." Pass on to 3: 7, "According to the gift of the grace of God"; and v. 11, "According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord"; v. 16, "According to the riches of His glory"; v. 20, "According to the power that worketh in us."

If men would humbly study God's Word, and closely consider the special expressions of each book, they would be amazed from day to day at the fields of blessedness that open up before them, as in this case, where God has marvellously provided for us the gift of eternal life.

But while the life is provided for us in Christ Jesus, the question is, to what it lifts us. Let no man for a moment think that he can exercise or enjoy this gift of life by any power of his own: it is simply according to what God has wrought in the Person of His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord. At the close of the first chapter we are told that all the power which is being exhibited to us—and with that power you can do marvels if you will rightly accept it—all that power is only according to what God wrought in the person of His Son Jesus Christ. "According to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet" (1: 19).

Have we recognised that in Christ Jesus, God exhibited His power that He might make Him to be, first, according to the Epistle to the Galatians, the representative Man, and according to this Epistle, the inclusive Man. And as the representative and inclusive Man, God raised Him from the dead and placed Him at His own right hand. And now how bright and brilliant the change that immediately results from the teaching of the Epistle to the Galatians to the teaching of the Epistle to the Ephesians!

The word *cross*, as we have seen, is only found once incidentally in this epistle; the word *death* is never found in this epistle—it is all *life*. The adjective *dead* comes four times in the epistle. It is only used twice, in the opening of the second chapter (vv. 1, 5), to show what we were by nature—"dead in trespasses and sins"—and how God loved us when we were dead in our sins; and it is twice used to show what we were delivered from. In 1: 20 it is said that God raised Christ from the dead; and the whole doctrine there is *life*. Then in 5: 14 you read, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." The whole teaching, then, is *life in Christ*, and life—where

God raised Christ and placed Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.

The reader is doubtless aware that a special key-word of the Epistle to the Ephesians is "the heavenly places," and that nowhere else in the whole of the writings of God's Spirit do we find this expression. Why? Because here we are being taught the magnificent privileges and potential possibilities for the believer. In 1: 3 we read, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Why? Because "He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places" (1: 20). And so, in 2: 6, "He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Then in 3: 10 we are told that the object of God is, that "now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." But see the consequence. For you come at last to 6: 13, where you are told to "take unto you the whole armour of God." Why? Because you are now to wrestle and fight "against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," or "heavenly places."

God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings, because He has seated His Son at His own right hand in the heavenly places; He has raised us in Him to sit in the heavenly places with and in Christ Jesus, that the whole of the principalities and powers around God's throne in the unsearchable breadth of the heavenlies may see the manifold wisdom of God in us, and may glorify God because of what you and I are. And then, because we are in the heavenlies and the enemy would seek to drag us down, we are to take the whole armour of God to fight and wrestle with the enemy.

But notice next, lest you should think that it is not possible for you to live up to these privileges, what is meant by the expression, "We wrestle against the wicked spirits in heavenly places." In 2: 2 it is said that the devil is "the prince of the power of the air." Has that expression ever struck us? When the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth, and was just passing to the Cross of Calvary, He three times over, on the last days of His life, spoke about Satan as "the prince of this world"—in John 12: 31; 14: 30; and 16: 11. Now the moment that Christ was raised from the dead He had conquered death and the devil, who had the power of death. We are told in Hebrews 2: 14, and in Revelation 1: 5, that Christ Jesus is "the prince of the kings of the earth." Why? Because He had taken the princedom of principalities of earth from Satan; He cast Satan out, and Satan is no longer the

prince of this world; he is only "the prince of the power of the air." Christ Jesus is the Prince, the truly anointed King of this world; and so we have Him, in Hebrews 12: 2, as "the author and finisher of our faith."

Mark the difference in 2 Corinthians 4: 4. There, Satan is called "the god of this world." Men may make a god; but thanks be to God, Jesus Christ has taken the princedom of this world from Satan, and has been placed by God at God's right hand as the "Prince of the kings of the earth," so that Satan is only in the air, and you and I are not below him on the earth if we are believers, but we are in the heavenlies in and with Christ Jesus, far above all principalities and powers in the heavenly places.

Now, see what a privilege it is to be above your enemy, not below him. I think the fault of nine-tenths of Christians today is this: they are trying to fight their way upward to heaven, instead of remembering that they are far above all principalities and powers, and they only have to fight downwards against the enemy who is seeking to mount the ramparts of glory and to eject us from the position where God has placed us, in Christ Jesus. We have not to fight upwards. We are already "more than conquerors through Him that loved us," and placed in the heavenly places, and we have to fight only downwards. And the armour, in v. 6, is all for the front of man, and not for his back. You are never to turn your back upon the enemy, but in the strength of Him who is behind you on the throne, you face your enemy; and your enemy can never cast you out from the high position where you sit in the heavenly places.

Having taken our place by faith, in those first three chapters, what is the practical issue of such a glorious position as this, with its privilege, and possibility, and power in the heavenlies? The answer is in 4: 1, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you . . ." Once again the apostle is pleading. This is not a word of command, but a word of entreaty. Though the Apostle Paul is so majestic sometimes in his eloquence and dignity, yet he is the tenderest of men, the tender shepherd of the flock, following in the steps of his Master, Jesus Christ.

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." Up in the heavenlies though you sit, as Christ sits, yet the moment there is anything to be done Christ rises, and Stephen sees the Son of Man *standing* at the right hand of God; and the devil, and the world, and all who want help below in this world as against the devil, are looking upwards, and we, by the grace of God, though we are "made to sit," may rise to do our part in

the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are told to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."

Have we ever been struck with the word *walk* in this epistle? There are seven mentions of walk here, and they all need to be noticed closely. Two concern the old walk in sin. In 2: 2, "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." That was the former life; we have nought to do with that today; we have passed from disobedience into the position of obedient children; and so St. Paul says in 4: 17, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind . . ." We have done with that; we have passed from that to a walk which is a holy walk, a walk of power, a walk of blessing.

Look now at the walk of grace and of glory. In 2: 10, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained" (Greek, *prepared*). God has prepared the works. Why be terrified? Why imagine that when God calls you to walk worthy of your vocation, He is going to leave you unbefriended and unenabled for the service? God has prepared the good works. Are you willing to walk in them? That is all that you and I have to do. So, 1: 4, "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." Then, if you look at the fifth chapter, you have three splendid walks which proceed from, or are the result of, the provision of God—"walk in love" (v. 2); "walk as children of light"—or *in the light* (v. 8); "walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time" (v. 15).

This is the magnificence of the walk which is to mark the Christian's course. When we are really in Christ Jesus, or with Christ now in the heavenly places, we rise to walk in the glory of God, in works which God has prepared for us, and in the vocation that calls us to be conformed to the image of God's dear Son. With the new man created in Christ Jesus working in us, and through us, we shall be enabled to walk and love and work as children of light, and circumspectly, and no longer as fools.

When we turn from the heavenly places, and the places accorded to us in Christ Jesus, to consider what will really be the outcome of this, I think most of us would have expected that if any part of the Scriptures was to be looked upon as transcendental, so marvellous and so refined as to be above the touch of man upon earth, it would have been in this epistle. Nowhere are we placed so high; yet nowhere does the apostle become so practical, and place the solemn duty or privilege of the believer so low down—

as men would call it—in the dull routine of life, as in this magnificent epistle.

But it is all toned by one thought, which will enable us to face the plain, clear, solemn duties of our relationship with one another, with which the apostle deals in the fifth and sixth chapters. Wives, husbands, children, parents, servants, masters: these deal with all the relationships of life. But mark, there is one touching little expression—"in love." How does it occur? It is very beautiful. You have it first in 1: 4, "That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Will you notice the solemn connections of this expression? I put before you the expression that you may afterwards study it: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye being rooted and grounded in love . . ." (3: 17). "With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love" (4: 2). What a claim; what a calling for us Christian people to forbear one another in love, so that there is not a shadow of jealousy crossing the brain or heart, but tenderness and forbearance! For the apostle is saying that you are in the heavenlies, and now you have got to forbear one another in love.

What for? Look at 4: 15. The body which he speaks of nine times in this epistle, is to be edifying itself in love: "Speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things which is the head, even Christ." Then v. 16, ". . . the body unto the edifying of itself in love." "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us" (5: 2). If that be fulfilled in us, we shall be indeed manifesting to the principalities and powers, to their astonishment, I believe, in the heavenlies the manifold wisdom of God. The very angels and principalities themselves will marvel at the power of the grace of God to take such a creature as I am, and make me walk in love, as Christ loved me, a little bit more and more every day.

Nine times, as I have said, is the expression "the body" used in this epistle; and it is to show us that we are one in Christ, and that we may have all the privileges and blessings which He enjoys, if we will only place ourselves in direct relation to Him.

Lastly, do you know what the intention of God is? That as wives, husbands, children, parents, servants, masters, brothers, sisters, friends, we should all be walking worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. Do you know His purpose? It is nowhere else so beautifully put, and it comes to us in four expressions of the word "fullness," as given in this epistle. I might have taken them in the order in which they occur if space permitted. I had intended to place them, first in their proper order in the epistle, and then reverse them and show how, while the purpose of God

is in the order in which they occur, the practical power is from the end to the beginning.

I must take them in this order. 5: 18, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." The life you live is to be in the Spirit. The Spirit of God is mentioned twelve times in this epistle, and man's spirit twice; in the Galatians, the Spirit of God was mentioned fifteen times, and man's spirit twice. But you are to be filled with the Spirit, which is the element of power by which we are to love.

Then we go back into the fourth chapter, and we find that we are to grow up into Christ (v. 13): "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Wonderful words! The fullness of the Spirit, the fullness of Christ, and the glory beyond. And what are we to be then? 1: 23, "His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all." That is what we are called to be. How can we live for the frivolities and vanities and dust of this world? Why not rise to the heavenlies wherein we are called to dwell, and seek by the grace of God from today to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called?

My last word is in 1: 6, "To the praise of the glory of His grace." That is, the Father's. And v. 7, "According to the riches of His grace"—that is, the Father's. Now v. 12, "That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ"—that is, "the Christ." And then in v. 14, "Unto the praise of His glory." That is said to be the Spirit of promise. So that it is all according to the riches of His glory, as it is given in v. 18: "The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." The praise of the glory of the grace of the Father; the praise of the glory of the love of the Christ; the praise of the glory of the wisdom and power of the Spirit; and the riches of His glory shall be seen through eternity in God's inheritance in His saints. God help us to live it.

III

GRACE AND PEACE IN THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

We turn now to the Epistle to the Philippians, of which these are the opening verses: "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi—Grace be unto you . . . I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the Gospel . . . being confident . . . that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

We pass here directly to the practical, to the daily life which we are called to live—not as we judicially placed ourselves, when studying Galatians, at the foot of Jesus' Cross in order that we might reap the benefits of that marvellous sacrifice; nor, as we endeavoured to place ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of God the Father. We come from both those positions now, to the practical daily life in the world that now is; in the position in which we are called to walk in human flesh, with unceasing temptations, painful trials, peculiar difficulties and circumstances which, to each particular soul, are so remarkable and so difficult that it seems impossible, perhaps, for us to live the high and holy life connected with our calling in Christ Jesus.

We like to theorise upon that calling; we like to read those words, "our high calling"; we like to think of what the apostle says to Timothy, that we have a holy calling; we like to think of what he says to the Hebrews, that we have a heavenly calling. But there is also an earthly calling, to glorify God while in the body, and in the spirit, both of which are His. The apostle in the Epistle to the Philippians, if I understand him rightly, is looking upon men and women who, like himself, were placed in the midst of the darkest possible trials, peculiar temptations and difficulties which it would be utterly impossible for them to face in any strength of theirs, but which he is prepared to show them, by the Spirit of God, they can face, they can overcome, they can glorify God in—and why? Because the life of the

Lord Jesus Christ is not only granted to them judicially through the Cross, and positionally in heaven, but practically here upon earth. That I understand to be the special subject of the Epistle to the Philippians. If I were asked for a key-text I should take it from 1: 21, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Then, having spoken of himself in those words, and recognising that others here on earth might not be able to take up the position of the apostle on the grounds that they were not so favoured, so marvellously transformed as he had been, he says in 4: 19, "My God shall supply all your need." He speaks of his own experience of God: he says, "my God." I wish that every one of us could say so, when we speak to troubled, anxious or weary souls: "My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

We have one difficulty here: not as we had it when dealing doctrinally with the Cross, nor when dealing with the magnificence of the heavenly places, but with the very simplicity of this epistle. There is, perhaps, not one of all the epistles by St. Paul so majestically simple that it is impossible for us to enlarge upon a particular word and say, "Here is a peculiar grammatical difficulty," or upon a particular verse and say, "There is an exegetical difficulty." Our difficulty lies really in the simplicity that is in Christ, as put by the apostle to the Philippians; and yet, who will not recognise that the more simple the diction and the more plain the sentence, the more marvellously profound are the truths offered to us.

For instance, we may well take up the words of a writer living among us, Dr. Moule, who says in the opening of his Philippian study, "To careful and loving Bible students, this epistle is one of the fairest and dearest regions of the Word of God." I pity the man who cannot say that, for I think that experimentally every true Christian has found the Epistle to the Philippians to be one of the dearest and one of the fairest regions of the whole divine library; and the privilege and power of this epistle would seem to lie in the fact that it emanates from the man who is placed—like ourselves, but far more deeply than we—in trials, difficulties, and troubles connected with this life here on earth.

No man among us could say that he is under such difficulties as St. Paul had to meet; and yet everyone, in reading this epistle, feels that the apostle has been led by the Holy Ghost to lift the veil from his own personal experience, and to give us what men like to hear sometimes—the experience of faithful servants of God; and to tell us how, by the Holy Ghost (though he does not speak much of the Spirit in this epistle; only twice is it mentioned here, and twice the spirit of man, in both of which latter

it may mean the Spirit of God)—but he does say that by the Spirit of God he was enabled to find in Jesus Christ an ample supply of all his possible needs.

Now may we bring you face to face with this, and say that this it is the apostle expects of the Philippians and of all Christians: he expects us to live the Gospel which he preached. May I ask you to notice how, in the first chapter, he brings us again face to face with the expression, "the Gospel."

People have asked, "What is the key-thought and the special subject of the epistle?" I am not aware that any commentator has ever been able to single out the one particular thought, as we can in some epistles, and to say, "This personates the whole of the epistle," but I think we may safely affirm that *the Gospel* is the thought of the epistle. May I ask you to notice how it recurs again and again. The apostle says in 1: 5, "I thank my God for your fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until now." Then in v. 7, "Inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the Gospel, ye are all partakers of my grace." In v. 12, "The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel." And v. 17, "Knowing that I am set for the defence of the Gospel." Then in v. 27 he comes to the practical deduction twice over in that verse: "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ," and in the close of the verse, "Striving together for the faith of the Gospel."

What a wonderful chain of thought is that, and what an opening it gives to us as to the purpose of the apostle in writing the Epistle to the Philippians, and through them to ourselves. And as he exhorts them, in v. 27, to let their conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ, may I beg you to notice how, in 3: 20, he refers to the same idea, and says, "our conversation is in heaven."

Let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ; and what is your conversation if it be truly according to the Gospel? "In heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." Then in 1: 27, he says, "Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel." In 4: 1 he says, "Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." Our conversation is as becometh the Gospel; the Gospel is that which our conversation is when our conversation is in heaven. Notice that we are called to stand fast in the faith of the Gospel, and when we come to the closing words, it is, "Therefore, my brethren . . .

stand fast in the Lord." What a glorious position, what a wonderful opening for the strife and difficulties connected with our present life upon earth.

But now, as in each of the other epistles, even so here we find that the sphere or element in which we are called to walk is directly and remarkably the person of the Lord Jesus Christ; and I trust we may never be weary with that, for if one were weary of thinking of Him as the very life and power of our existence, one would altogether fall from the power and faith of the Gospel. For notwithstanding what people think to be dismal teaching of the Epistle to the Philippians, it is remarkable how throughout the whole of the epistle there is a continuity of reference to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

No fewer than nineteen times do you find "Christ Jesus" or "Jesus Christ"; no fewer than eighteen times do you find "Christ" occurring alone; and as far as I am able to discover, the difference between the usages of these two expressions in the epistle would seem to be this: when the apostle wants to bring forward the magnificent person of Christ for Himself, he either mentions Him by the name *Christ Jesus*, as the One who came from heaven to men, or *Jesus Christ*, as the One who goes from man to God; and he gives Him a double title beyond that, the title "Christ Jesus my Lord," or "Christ Jesus our Lord." But when in this epistle he wishes to bring out the experimental power which the Lord Jesus Christ brings to bear upon an individual man, as in the case of Paul himself, he always uses the expression "Christ"; and so he says, "To me to live is Christ," "My bonds in Christ," "The day of Christ." It is always "Christ" when he thinks of Him as his own personal Saviour, his own personal power, his own personal prospect.

In this particular epistle he theoretically enlarges upon "Christ Jesus" given us by God, "Jesus Christ" gone from man to God, and "Christ Jesus my Lord," the magnificent personage who is one with God the Father for ever. And so it is that he is able to say in the second chapter, "God hath given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus . . ."; not that name of Jesus as Jesus, but the name that Jesus bears, Dr. Moule says, and other writers agree with him. Some think that it is that "new name" mentioned in the third chapter of Revelation. But the meaning in that verse is, "That at the name which Jesus bears, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Herein lies the splendid secret of the all-pervading power and

beauty of this simple Epistle to the Philippians: it is *Christ*, nothing but Christ; Christ Jesus in His majesty, Christ Jesus as the Lord, but Christ as my life, my power, my eternal prospect in the day of His glory. And so when he is connecting himself with Christ he very beautifully brings forward the preposition *in*, which I humbly think to be the key preposition of this epistle, as *by* was the preposition of the Galatian epistle, and *with* was the preposition of the Ephesian epistle.

The preposition *in* occurs no fewer than twenty-four times in this one short epistle. You find the apostle enlarging upon the fact, either with regard to himself or with regard to his disciples, that we are *in Jesus Christ the Lord*, a beautiful truth never to be forgotten, never to be left out of consideration. In the original Greek it is sometimes "in Christ," sometimes "in Christ Jesus our Lord," and there are eight times where, in a beautiful way, the apostle brings out the expression "in the Lord"—and when we remember that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father, the full power of that will only be observed as you recognise that in every one of these eight expressions where the words "in the Lord" occur, he is dealing with practical daily experience, either for himself or others.

Just take the opening of the fourth chapter, and you will observe the phrase, "Stand fast in the Lord"; v. 2, "Be of the same mind in the Lord"; v. 4, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice"; v. 10, "I rejoiced in the Lord greatly." He is the all-prevailing and all-enabling One to Paul; and while he rejoices in Christ as his Saviour and life, the Lord in the abstract of that wondrous expression Jehovah—and only those who have studied the title *Jehovah* as given in the Old Testament will be able at all to appreciate the glory of the expression—Jehovah becomes to him the centre of attraction, the all-providing influence of his life, and the power by which he will glorify God.

Such, then, I humbly think to be the key-idea of the Epistle to the Philippians, studied in the abstract under the titles and prepositions.

But behind all this there must lie, as you will expect, as written by one in St. Paul's position, a peculiar application for the life that we have to live upon earth. Turn for a moment to the apostolic days, and remember that the epistle was written probably by his amanuensis, and only sealed by himself after the close. He was chained to a Roman soldier, waiting, as he says, for the verdict of Nero in the Emperor's palace—not in the darker confinement of his after days, but, with Bishop Lightfoot and Bishop Moule, I humbly consider that this epistle was written very early in the Roman captivity, when he was in "his own hired

house," as mentioned in Acts, or in the palace of the Emperor.

If that be so, you can imagine how the solitary prisoner looks back over the past, and, especially remembering those whom he has been permitted to bring to God in the days of his freedom, he recalls his life in Philippi, a time which, I think, must have been one of the most precious and solemn in his memory. There he could recall how, by the grace of God, he had been permitted to exercise that faith which exhibits itself in action—how he had preached, how he had suffered, how he had been enabled to praise God in the prison, how he had testified before the magistrates of the city.

Then he would recall to his memory Lydia, the seller of purple; and the gaoler to whom he had preached, and whom he had baptised; and those to whom he had ministered at the riverside. There would also come back to him the memories of a well-established church, which was considerably developed both in numbers and spiritual life. With the chain round his wrist and awaiting the martyrdom which he had to undergo, he had to speak to them practically, and while asking, "Is life worth living?" he was bringing forth from the treasures of God what he was enabled to say can be true also experimentally to others. This was a life of prayer; and it is to this life of prayer that we are called in the daily experiences and circumstances which we are apt to consider most dark.

It is in this epistle, as in no others, that the apostle brings out the wondrous subject of joy which is so truly consistent with all that appertains to the real Christian life upon earth. Five times he mentions the noun *joy*, nine times the verb *to rejoice*, and twice *to rejoice with others*. Now it is idle to tell men to say, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice," unless one is able to exhibit to them grounds whereby joy may permeate their being. Though under circumstances of difficulty, and pain, and suffering, it may be difficult, yet I believe that a Christian should always be joyful. It is one of the most remarkable facts connected with the blessed Master that, so far as the records of the life are concerned, there is only once (Luke 10: 21) a mention of joy until the night before He died, and then He was speaking to the apostles of His own joy, and bidding them have that joy which was His, and that their joy should be full.

Again and again, in the thirteenth to the seventeenth chapters of St. John's Gospel, when nearing the close of His life upon earth, you have this delightful joy coming in. Why? Because, if I understand joy rightly, it is somewhat different from joviality; it is simply acquiescence in the will of the Father, a delight in God's holy will, whatever that will may be.

Here again, while treading reverently upon what may be described as delicate ground, I would venture to remind you that, though He again and again throughout His whole career on earth did say, "Father, Thy will be done," yet never throughout the life of Jesus do we find the expression come from His own lips, except in the prayer that He taught us to use, "Father, not my will, but Thine be done," till the night before His death. Of course He said it before; but for our sakes it is recorded that on that awful night when men discarded Him, and He had to say, "Ye shall leave me alone, yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me," that night as He lay in anguish with blood pouring from His brow in Gethsemane, there arises up to heaven this wondrous cry, "O my Father, not my will, but Thine be done." Why? Because He had come to that point of "obedience by the things which He suffered" (Heb. 5: 8), that He could be heard, as His cry went up to heaven, in a way that perhaps even He had, in one sense as our Representative, never been heard before.

He was being made perfect for sacrifice on our behalf; and so as He had learned obedience through those thirty-three years, and had come now to the final point of absolute perfection experimentally, as always, of course, in His person as Man, He bowed His face before the Father; and though it might cost Him the human life and all that anguish of sin-bearing, He says, "Thy will, my Father, be done."

That is joy. Is it true that that is all that can ever be described as joy? It will be the joy of heaven to do His will; it should be a joy upon earth to do His will; and the Saviour has left us the blessed example, that as He could lie in mortal anguish and say, "My father, Thy will be done," so you and I are to learn obedience by the things that we suffer, and then to say, perhaps, at the last gasp of life, with absolute truth, "O my Father, Thy will be done." It will cost us much. It cost St. Paul much; and when he wrote the epistle of joy he was learning obedience by the things which he suffered.

What a beautiful privilege it was, as he tells us in 3: 10, to enter into the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ! And you will observe how, in the last words of the first chapter, he says, "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him"—and there are many here who say, "I am a believer"—"but also to suffer for His sake; having the same conflict which ye saw in me." That night when he was put into prison with the awful stripes upon his back, they saw in him the conflict of victory. Then in 2: 17 he says, "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me." Why?

Because by the mercy of God he was ready to "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church"—and to know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings is something infinitely but experimentally higher and nobler than merely to sit down and sing hymns, however profitable that may be. God grant us grace to understand what it is to enter into the sufferings of Christ.

But how shall it be? The apostle tells us. He has given us in the opening chapter his idea of the Gospel, how the Gospel of Christ is to be the working power upon earth in the Christian. Thus we have another key-word in this epistle—and it will never be appreciated until that word has been carefully studied. It is a word *to be of one mind*; and we find the apostle eleven times making use of that verb to express generally, with regard to men's own experience, what they ought to be, and how this work ought to be carried out in them.

In 2: 2, as if he were not quite satisfied with those beloved disciples, he says, "Fulfil ye my joy, and be ye like-minded, having the same love, having one accord, of one mind." What mind? In the fifth verse, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Jesus Christ, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant . . . and humbled Himself."

He became a slave, and as a slave He died a malefactor's death. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; and find your joy not merely in being saved, but in suffering—saved by Christ, suffering with Christ or for Christ, and satisfied with Christ. That is the order in which we have to pass from the degradation of sin to the dignity of eternal glory.

Now when St. Paul comes to the opening of the third chapter, he opens appropriately with his closing words. You would imagine that the first verse of the third chapter is to be the farewell of the whole epistle. He says, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord," and to that he refers in 4: 4, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." But between those two there lies a wonderful autobiographical sketch, such as we have nowhere else, from the pen or mind of St. Paul concerning himself; and he brings out for us what the true Christian is, just what we ought to be—no longer having any confidence in the flesh, but rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and that alone, and then worshipping God in the Spirit.

Turning from his own past experience, in which he had a right to be proud, as a joy, he tells us what it was that he found when he took Christ. I may not enlarge upon that, excepting to say

that if we are to know what the life here upon earth in Christ is, we must recognise what St. Paul possessed and gained, how in Christ we may possess all blessing, counting "all things" else but loss.

We pass now to 3: 8, and ask you to notice the "all things," because this is what gives us such glorious power. "I count all things but loss," and until that is done there is no fair start in the race that we are called now by the apostle to run. Then, having counted all things but loss, we shall find, in some degree, like the apostle (3: 8) that we have to suffer the loss of all things that men count dear. We think it hard, and I am touched deeply with sympathy for people who cross my path and say, "My circumstances are such that I cannot!" No, nobody thought you could; but Christ can! It is a question for those who are suffering the loss of all things—the husband, the father, the friend, the child, the home, the ties that are so dear, and make us cleave to this world—it is a question for them whether God be true.

A man in an after-meeting said to another, who was in agony, "Can you take that?" "No, I cannot." "Then turn with me to Romans 3: 4, 'Let God be true . . .'" "Stop!" O brethren, that is what is wanted. It was the turning-point of the man's life, and from that moment for four-and-twenty years God has been true to him. "Let God be true," and by the grace of God we shall find that when we have suffered the loss of all things and won Christ, there will be ample compensation. "That I may know Him" (3: 10). One Friend in heaven to walk with by grace is better than all the friends on earth put together. May we enter into the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death, if by any means we may attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Let me now ask you to notice what is before us. In 1: 6 the apostle says, "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Look again at v. 10, "That ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ." 2: 16, "Holding forth the Word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." The day of Christ is what is to compensate, and we must look to the day of Christ if we want our reward. But meantime is God going to leave His children in destitution and distress? You have given up all things, you have suffered the loss of much that you counted dear; will God compensate you? Look at 3: 21, where we read that Christ Jesus is able to "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

Have you brought your body to Christ to be subdued—this almost accursed body in one sense, the vile body, the body of our humiliation, that brings us so low, and costs so much in our spiritual life? He is able to subdue all things, as our Collect in the Church of England has it: "The flesh being subdued to the spirit, we may be able to obey Thy kindly motions in righteousness and true holiness." Then look at 4: 11, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, to be content . . . In all things I am instructed . . . both to abound and to suffer need." What a secret!

I suppose that after the subjugation of the flesh, the next thing that any Christian would yearn for is that the body, and all connected with it, may walk in calm contentment; that one's mind may know rest in Christ. St. Paul got it; he learned to be content with everything that God sent to him. Look at v. 13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"; and v. 18, "I have all, and abound." That is the man whose body is lying waiting for the martyr's stake, with a chain round his wrist and, perhaps, with a brutal Roman soldier by his side. That man can say, without a friend, a hope, or an earthly prospect, "I have learned the secret of being content in all things; I am all-prevailing in Christ Jesus, which strengtheneth me; and I have all things and abound."

That to you and to me the apostle Paul is saying now from heaven. If He will only say to me and to you, by the power of the Holy Ghost, these words, I shall, indeed, be for ever content: "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

IV

GRACE AND PEACE IN THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

Will you turn to the Epistle to the Colossians, and the opening verses: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the Gospel."

You will observe that in these verses the apostle is able to speak of the three great graces which characterise the Christian life, as being found in his Colossian converts. He says in v. 4, "We heard of your faith in Christ Jesus." That is the starting point of all. "We have heard of your love which ye have to all the saints." That is the proof that you are in Christ Jesus. "We have heard also of the hope which is working in you, and which is laid up for you in heaven; and you have begun to exercise that hope since you heard the word of the truth of the Gospel."

This wondrous epistle is addressed to "the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse," and if to them, we may be perfectly sure that it is addressed to the saints and faithful brethren in all ages and countries, because it is in this epistle that we have that remarkable sentence in 4: 16, where the apostle says, "When this epistle is read among you, cause that it be also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea." That, as we have already hinted, and as is now generally accepted by the learned, is spoken in relation to what we call the Epistle to the Ephesians; and if it be thus, we have the direct exhortation of the apostle Paul to make his letter available for the churches at large and wheresoever they be. So we boldly take it for ourselves. If in any part of God's Holy Word there be power for the daily life which Christians have to live in the midst of temptation and

trial, I think we may certainly affirm that in this wonderful epistle to the church at Colosse, and through that church to ourselves, we have direct exhortation, and most powerful words of edification, whereby we may be enabled to glorify God.

I suppose we shall admit that the Gospel, according to St. Paul, is summed up in the words which he gives us in 1: 18, "That in all things He might have the pre-eminence." I take that as the key-thought of this epistle, and in fact of all the teachings of the apostle Paul. There is a well-known sentence recorded by Dr. Moule, in his *Colossian Studies*, as having proceeded from the mouth of old Charles Simeon, who chose those Scripture words for his text in one of his last sermons: "That in all things He might have the pre-eminence." Speaking in the loudest possible words in his church in Cambridge, he said, "He must have it, He will have it, and He shall have it." Dr. Moule records that this made the deepest possible impression upon his audience, and that they were struck, as perhaps never before, with the blessed conviction that the purpose of God must be fulfilled, and that that purpose is really summed up for all ages, for the whole world and the universe, in these words, "That in all things Christ Jesus should have the pre-eminence."

That is to say, as Dr. Moule adds, that, as in creation so in redemption; as in the natural so in the spiritual world, He, the Christ, is in all things holding the pre-eminence. The aim and object of the apostle Paul is, in my humble measure, the aim and object that I have sought to achieve—to bring these epistles before this audience from day to day, that in all things, in our daily life, in our conversation, in our faith, in our love, and in our hope, Christ Jesus the Lord may be holding the primacy, or the pre-eminence.

It lies with us, at the close of these Bible Readings, or of this Convention, to go forth into the battle or journey of life once more and say, "Who is to be our leader; who is to be our guide; who is to be the master; who is to be the Lord in every single portion of our existence?" St. Paul says, "That in all things He should have the pre-eminence," and the question is whether God's purpose is to be fulfilled, or whether we are to be rebels even to the end.

We have been rebels; we have directly entered into rebellion too many times against the Lord, the great King, the King who is the Prince of the kings of the earth; and we have not given Him His rights, I fear. And that is why we are gathered here. There would be no need for this convention if all the Christian Churches were carrying out the purpose of God in their daily life; there would be no need for us to gather together

to enquire from day to day, as we enquire, What is the power of Christ, and in what way is that power to be exercised? If the Lord were given what belongs to Him, the world at large would be the better for the Church, and Christ would receive the glory that is His right, and His Kingdom would very speedily be brought to pass on the earth. This is the purpose for which God has given us this Gospel, and concerning which we are taught by the apostle in this particular passage.

Will you notice, in 1: 16–20, that in the Greek no fewer than twelve times is the expression "He Himself" found. As all scholars are aware, generally speaking the verb is given without any pronoun before it when the person is not of any particular prominence in the passage. But in this passage it seemed needful to the apostle, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, to bring out the person of the Lord Jesus Christ in the most prominent way that could be devised. May I read these verses that you may see the prominence given to the Lord?

From v. 16—"For by Him"—mark the prepositions—"were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him (Greek, 'through' Him), and for Him"—the purpose of God was that they should be for His beauty and for His glory—"and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things He"—He Himself—"might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven."

In connection with the thought of giving Christ His glory, will you notice the expression in v. 16, that not only thrones and dominions, but principalities and powers are said to be overcome by the Lord Jesus Christ for us. Look at 2: 10, "Ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power." Once again will you look at v. 15, "Having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show over them openly, triumphing over them in it," that is, in the Cross. He is made by God the head of all principalities and powers; He is for us the head of principalities and powers. He has taken away the power of all other principalities and powers, and nailed them to His cross, so that they are done away with, and they no longer have any active force against the Lord Jesus; nor can they really injure those who belong to Him. They are the principalities

and powers of the air, the lower heavenlies. Christ is in the upper heavenlies, far above all heavens, far above all principalities and powers; and we as believers are in Him.

Therefore, as I ventured to say in dealing with the Ephesians, we stand in, or sit in Christ Jesus, far above all principalities and powers that are against us; and they fight upwards from the lower heavenlies, while we sit in Jesus Christ in the heavenlies of the heavenlies, even at the very right hand of God Himself.

Such is the purpose of God with regard to Christ: that He should be not only the centre of all creation, not only the beauty of all creation, but the ultimate end and aim of all creation, and that He should have in all these things the pre-eminence. We shall not understand this aright until we see the deep force with which the apostle makes use in this epistle of the expression "in Him." Mark how v. 19 says, "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." But that is not sufficient. If you look at 2: 9, 10, you read, "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And in Him ye are made full. Ye are filled unto all fulness in Him" (Greek). It is a continuous process carried on through all time from the moment of its commencement. We shall see the power of that word "bodily" in a moment. But that is not the end of it yet.

Turn to 4: 12, and there we find that prayer of Epaphras on behalf of his beloved brethren in the church of Colosse, that they might "stand perfect and complete"—the same word as "filled unto all fulness"—in what? We are filled unto all fullness in Him; but there remains the filling out of the body which is the Church in the fullness of submission to "the will of God."

I desire to show that the one aim and object especially of this epistle is that the Christian Church may learn obedience and be submissive to the will of God, so that they may glorify God even in the trials of this world by obedience to and faith in Christ who is the Head.

Notice the special object which the apostle is seeking on behalf of those Colossian Christians, that God would manifest Christ to them. In 1: 9, he says, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you . . ." He had said that he thanked God with all his heart for what he knew of their faith and love and hope; and that Epaphras had declared unto him their "love in the Spirit"—the only case in this epistle in which the Spirit of God is mentioned. We have in 2: 5 an undoubted allusion to their own spirit. But here the apostle now turns with gratitude to speak that prayer; and I ask you to notice the purport of the prayer, for it is that this may be fulfilled in us that you and I are gathered here before God this morning.

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard *it*"—a word which means your faith and love and hope—"do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge." Notice that word "knowledge," another key-word of this epistle. It is mentioned here, "The knowledge of His will." And the next verse: "Increasing in the knowledge of God." Then 2: 2, "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding"—*knowledge* is the real word—"of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." Will you look at 3: 10, "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him." This word "knowledge" is a remarkable word, as every scholar knows. It is not mere speculative or historical knowledge; it is not the knowledge of the student only; it is the knowledge of *experience*; it is the knowledge of *progress*; it is the knowledge of *advance*, that is, passing on to full and perfect knowledge of the mystery of God and of the Father, and of Jesus Christ our Lord.

The one great cry of the apostle for his converts is, "Oh, my God, I pray without ceasing that they may be filled with knowledge." But notice what the knowledge is: "the knowledge of His will" (1: 9). That they may be "increasing in the knowledge of God" (1: 10). That they may increase "in the knowledge of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ" (2: 2), that they may grow day by day experimentally in the knowledge which comes by the possession of the new man, and exhibit the new man as the power of God's real creation. God has created all things in Christ Jesus and for Christ Jesus; and you are created in Christ Jesus and for Christ Jesus, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence in your lives.

Mark, next, the special purport with which the apostle seems to be writing to the Colossians. There is, as we have explained, in each of these four epistles, a special key-thought or idea. In Galatians it was the Cross of Christ, where we have our place as being crucified with Him, that we may have done with the old man, with self, with the flesh, with the world, judicially, and by God's grace as far as possible experimentally, from day to day, and find ourselves delivered from the bondage of law. We stand at the Cross of Christ, and we watch Him fulfilling all righteousness on our behalf, and we claim it judicially and experimentally through the Cross.

In Ephesians we pass into the holy of holies, and we find ourselves not only judicially, but by faith experimentally, seated with Christ in the heavenly places, far above all principalities and powers, and with privileges also marvellous. Of all the kind

words I have received since I have spoken, those who have talked with me have chiefly said, "It was the heavenly places that brought comfort to my soul, to find how I was seated with Christ in the presence of God." But I would not have you tarry there, for I know that the battle of life is stern, and that we have to come down.

One of our writers has said, "There are too many Christians who are content to live on earth from day to day, and pay 'society calls' in heaven upon God." Our privilege is to live in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, and day by day and hour by hour to pay visits to earth for the service of the King, that we do His business as His messengers among them. At the same time, while seated in the heavenlies for our privilege, understand the service of the King down here on earth.

Then we passed to the Epistle to the Philippians, and we found that while our privilege before was to be at the Cross and claim exemption with all its blessedness, and to be seated in the heavenlies and claim fellowship with all its high privileges, we had also to learn the joy of the Lord for our strength in suffering, and take our place with the chained and imprisoned apostle; we had to take up the battle of the Lord, and see that even there, under all the darkest trials that earth can offer, it is the Christian's privilege and power to be filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and to rejoice in the Lord always, and again to rejoice.

Now we pass to the Epistle to the Colossians, and what do we find here? We have again a totally different aspect, and yet always concerning the same thing. It is a view of Christ with the pre-eminence in all things, and as—what? That we may come to an experimental knowledge—of whom? Of Christ Jesus the *Head.* I want you to recognise this great key-thought of this epistle. The same word occurs the same number of times in the Ephesian epistle; we were there placed with Him in the heavenlies, and He was the Head of the Church, seated at the right hand of God. But here He is the Head of the Church which is serving Him upon earth; and He is the Head in the sense that He is to have the pre-eminence in all things, governing the body, not at God's right hand with Himself, but governing the body here upon earth. And so this Epistle to the Colossians is perhaps the most practical, though little understood to be so, of all the epistles, because it asks whether you are prepared to make Christ the true Head of the body in all the fullness of that solemn word.

Will you notice the expression where it occurs? In 1: 18, "He is the Head of the body, the church." In 2: 10, "Ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principalities and powers." In v. 19, the one special blame that he puts upon those

who are hindering the Colossian Christians, is that they are "not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." This, then, is the special purpose with which the apostle is addressing himself to these Colossian converts and to us—that in all things Christ should have pre-eminence as the Head of the body.

Now shall we notice how he uses the expression, "the body." In 1: 18, "He is the Head of the body, the church." How does He become the Head of the body, the church? Look at v. 22, "In the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprovable in His sight." Then in v. 24 the apostle says, "I, too, am humbly ready in my position to fill up that which is lacking of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church." But now in the second chapter you have a remarkable chain of thought connected with that body. In v. 9 he says, "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," in the bodily form of man. In v. 11: "He has put off by His Cross for us the body of the sins of the flesh." Notice the contrast. In His body by death He has put off for us, thank God, the body of the sins of the flesh. By sure spiritual circumcision we attain to the knowledge of it, and it is ours when we are buried with Him by baptism and raised to a new life.

Then in v. 17 he says that all other things are only shadows, but the true body is of Christ. In v. 19 we are to hold "the Head, from which all the body," the Church, is to be increasing "with the increase of God." In v. 18 he shows that there are certain foolish evil teachers who would hinder men by their vain attempts at self-righteousness; and that they put forward wisdom in will-worship and neglect of the body. It is a question whether that means the mere corporeal frame or the body of Christ as the Church. It may be opined that it applies to both, that we are neglecting our own bodily frame, and all the time we are neglecting the real body which is Christ's Church, of which we are a part. Finally, in 3: 15 the apostle says, "The peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body." Then ye are indeed to be thankful.

That this is the purport of the epistle, is clear; that down here upon earth we are to recognise our position. Christ is the Head far above all principalities and powers. We, the body, the visible, the corporeal representation of Christ, are here upon earth. What does the head do to the body? It dictates every single motion; it orders everything that concerns the frame; it has a right as a master principle to say what the body shall do, according

to its possibility and capacity. And so with the Church upon earth. The wonderfully practical purport of this epistle is, that every single member of the body should recognise its humble, its lowly position.

I can only refer you for this to 1 Corinthians 12, and ask you to remember that "The head cannot say"—I love that verse more than any other I know with reference to this subject—"the head cannot say to the feet, I have no need of thee." Christ cannot say—*cannot*, wonderful word! the limitations of the divine by the greatness of God's love to us—Christ cannot say, "I have no need of you." He wants you; He wants your very hands, your very heart. What a vain thing it would be if the feet were to say to the head, "I refuse to do your bidding."

We are called to act as the members of Christ's body, in humble, entire, instinctive obedience. I do not say anything to my hand to make it obey my will. According to my power it acts until the brain is paralysed and the heart is still. The hand and the feet obey the head; and the whole teaching of the apostle, I think, in this beautiful letter to the Colossians, is that the body recognises its lowly position, and it recognises no other headship, no other lordship. "Other lords have had dominion over us; but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name" in the future.

Let the members of Christ's body recognise no dominion, no principalities, no power, but those of the Christ of God, but those of the Head in glory. He dictates to the working members of His body on earth, and says, "Do this." "I say to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." That is where you are wrong, perhaps; that is where your soul is troubled; that is why you know no peace; that is why you are always in a fret. Christ Jesus has been giving you commands, and you are men or members under authority, yet you refuse to recognise that the Lord Jesus Christ is One who is over all, that you and I are under His authority, and He says, "Come," and we come if we are obedient servants of His; and He says "Go," and we go if we are His true soldiers; and He says, "Do this," and we do it if we are His slaves, or members who recognise the position that we hold in the body, of absolute submission to the dictatorial, the autocratic, the imperial Head.

"The government is upon His shoulders." Shall He have His rights? I know no other commission wherewith to close my humble offering toward the blessedness of this great Convention, than to say to every obedient slave or member, "Go, do the will of your Lord and Master. Then shall you increase in the knowledge of God."

But we cannot finish without noticing the perils that beset the members of Christ's body. At the close of the first chapter of Colossians, the apostle states that he has one purpose in life—that he may "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Then he suddenly seems to recognise the presence of danger in that beloved flock for which his whole heart was given over to God, and he says, "This I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words . . . Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ . . . Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days; which are shadows of things to come; but the body is of Christ. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding the Head . . ." (2: 4–19).

Four distinct warnings against man: First, lest any man should beguile you (v. 4); second, beware lest any man spoil you (v. 8); third, let no man therefore judge you (v. 16); fourth, let no man beguile you, or rob you of your reward (v. 18). Mark the kinds of perils against which he warns the Christians at Colosse and the Christians in the Keswick tent. They may be summed up in the remarkable words of a book of great value by Mr. Hugh Black, in which he says that there are two great methods of heresy or danger, or two instincts of the human mind brought out under the expressions Hebrewism and Hellenism. These two expressions seem remarkably to fit into the two dangers against which St. Paul was warning the Colossians, and against which I would humbly seek to warn you. In our modern times they may be found summed up, on the one hand, in ritual performance of ceremonial, as if that were of value before God without real faith in Christ, and in thus going back into Judaistic bondage of law; and on the other hand in gnosticism, dealings with angels, seeking to enter into the unseen—in Hellenism with its magnificent idea of developing humility until it practically deifies itself at the expense of the true God. These are the doctrines against which Paul warns the Colossians.

Side by side, this Hebrewism and Hellenism walk into our churches; or one by one door, and the other by another: they meet in the common ground of the church's home, and so spoil the members of Christ's body. They are trying to do it today, and the souls of men are in mortal peril, unless they realise that Hebrewism has no place now in the Church of Christ, and that Hellenism is a danger at every point of our existence.

There is magnifying of law or performances on the one hand, and magnifying of humanity and human wisdom on the other; and in both there is mortal peril: I pray God to keep my hearers from one extreme and from the other, or from foolishly attempting to combine the two at the expense of Christ's pre-eminence. Give the Lord His due, I pray you; recognise the wonderful word which is the key to all the apostolic teaching, the key of all that I have humbly sought to show, at least the summing up of all that I would wish to say—"Christ is all and in all" (3: 11).

Let it be so to me and to you; and then, what will happen? You will observe how the apostle turns from the heresies to apply the Gospel to every department of life. He says in 2: 20—one of his marvellous *therefores* in the Greek, instead of "wherefore," as we have it in the English; and also in 3: 1, "If ye then . . ." *therefore*. What are the two *therefores* put together? "Therefore if ye be dead with Christ . . ." "Therefore if ye be risen with Christ."

Look to your souls. Is the Gospel a reality to you? Have you died with Christ? When you die with Christ on Calvary's Cross, and have taken your place in that wondrous death, then you have done with legality for ever. Are you risen with Christ? Then you have done with gnosticism, with human wisdom, and worshipping of angels. Yours is *Christ*—not angels, not spirits, not formality of worship, not talking with the dead. You have done with seances which take you into communication with spirits below, infinitely below, the King, the Lord, the Christ, who is to command you. Let Christ be all and in all to you, and then you will not neglect either your own body, or the body of the Church, but work for it.

And now, what will be the practical use of this? Look at 3: 5. Are you dead and risen with Christ? Then if you die and your life is hid with Christ in God, "mortify your members which are upon the earth"—put them to death because they died. What a wonderful expression! They did die in Christ. Now by God's grace make them die. I have not time to develop all that is said concerning the nature of these members—fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness. Mortify them: by God's grace put them to death.

Next in v. 9, "Ye have put off the old man." You did put him off; put him off. Judicially it was done for you. Put off also all those things which belong to the old man: "anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication." No more scandal in relation to Christians, no more bitterness or vexation or temper; but the old man being put off, by the grace of God you have put on the new man (v. 10). And v. 12, "Put on, therefore, as the

elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another."

Then see what your life will be. In v. 14, you will have as a characteristic of your life "charity," that is love; you will have "the peace of God" (v. 15) ruling in all your heart and life; you will have "the word of Christ" dwelling in you richly (v. 16). Do you know why so many Christians are cold? They do not take the word of Christ to dwell in them richly. I find that half my people come to church without Bibles, and they carry a prayer-book that would "go into a thimble." As for the Bible, that would not do in London; it is not respectable; they are going to take a walk in the park, and they would not be seen with a Bible under their arm!

Let the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom; let us keep ourselves to our Bibles, and be known as Bible Christians, not for the sake of outward show, but to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it; and then we shall live truly practical Christian lives. Wives will submit themselves to their own husbands, not to other men; husbands will love their wives, not other women; children will bow to their parents, not expecting parents to bow to children as they do in the twentieth century everywhere; parents will not provoke their children by getting about and leaving the children to other persons, but will take the responsibilities of parentage, and live them out by the grace of God; servants will not be always putting their heads in the air, and saying, "I give you notice from this day month!" but they will submit; masters and mistresses will be tender with their servants, and regard their souls far more than their dinner table, though they will also see to that. And so we shall have practical Christianity.

Brethren, like Epaphras of Colosse, so do I, on behalf of you all today, pray earnestly that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

III

THE WORK OF CHRIST FOR THE BELIEVER

by

Dr. A. T. Pierson

1904

DR. ARTHUR T. PIERSON

Acknowledgment has already been made of the great contribution to Keswick, from its earliest days, by speakers from America: and this is not surprising, since the Convention movement owed its inception to an impetus from across the Atlantic. No other visitor from the United States has, however, occupied so distinctive a place at Keswick as did Dr. A. T. Pierson, in the dozen years of his association with the Convention, from 1897 to 1909. He was not only a greatly valued speaker, but was manifestly recognised as one of the leaders and "elder statesmen." It would seem that his qualities of mind and character set him among the "inner circle" from the first. Not by any official position or pronouncement, but by sheer spiritual stature and intrinsic gifts of leadership, Dr. Pierson unobtrusively commanded a confidence and exercised an authority at Keswick unequalled by any compatriot of his in all the history of the Convention. We can only compare it with the remarkable dominance of the Convention of 1895 by Dr. Andrew Murray, on the occasion of his only visit as a speaker. Again and again we read of Dr. Pierson presiding at momentous meetings, and shaping the course of events in gatherings fraught with explosive potentialities, in the years of the Welsh Revival—when Keswick seemed to tremble on the brink of Pentecostal manifestations.

Arthur T. Pierson was born in New York in 1837, and ordained in 1860 as a Presbyterian minister. He became widely known as a Bible teacher, lecturer, author, and advocate for Missions. In 1889 C. H. Spurgeon invited Dr. Pierson to come to London as his *locum tenens* at the Metropolitan Tabernacle while he sought renewal of health in France—though, in fact, he died there a few months later. Dr. Pierson's ministry was so appreciated at the Tabernacle that a large proportion of the congregation wished him to remain as Spurgeon's successor; but an unhappy controversy broke out, since others wanted the great preacher's son to succeed him—so Pierson withdrew and returned home.

In 1895 Prebendary Webb-Peploe met Dr. Pierson at Northfield, the conference centre established in America by D. L. Moody. They became firm friends; and through the ministry of Webb-Peploe Dr. Pierson was greatly blessed. It was this contact which led to Pierson's visit to Keswick in 1897, and subsequent regular attendances. "Though Dr. Pierson's association with Keswick did not go back over very many years," writes his biographer, Mr. J. Kennedy Maclean, "it was at Keswick, perhaps, more than anywhere else, that he possessed his kingdom and occupied the sphere fitting his great gifts. There he dominated the Convention by his spiritual and intellectual gifts, and

thousands hung upon his words with great eagerness for instruction and help that was never disappointed."

In 1898 and again in 1900 he delivered one Bible Reading (see page 6), and in 1902 he gave two. Then in 1905 he delivered the series of four reproduced here; and again in 1907 he gave four—one of which is included in *Keswick's Authentic Voice*. Like many of the Bible Readings of the earlier days, these closely conform to the pattern of teaching characteristic of Keswick, and are more like ordinary Convention addresses than Bible Readings as we understand the term today. They bring to us, however, the burning conviction, the deep devotion, and dedication to the will and service of God, of those earlier days.

I

CHRIST OUR WISDOM FROM GOD

I HAVE had it laid upon me to speak to you upon Christ as our Wisdom, our Righteousness, our Sanctification and our Redemption (1 Cor. 1: 30). There is provision for holiness, for rest, and for victory in every department of our life. We can rest in Christ as our wise Counsellor, as our Righteousness from God, as our Sanctification through the Spirit, and as our final Redemption.

No doubt the expression "from God" should be connected with the word "wisdom." "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." You remember that, when Abraham separated from Lot, as we read in Genesis 13, giving Lot the fairest of the inheritance, God told him to lift up his eyes and look northward and southward and eastward and westward, and said, "All that thou seest will I give unto thee." Here is the place where we get on the mountain-top, and look northward and southward and eastward and westward, and survey the entire work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here is the whole work of Christ from its beginning to its conclusion; and it is in the divine order of that work. He is, first of all, our Teacher, our Wisdom from God; then He becomes the medium of our Righteousness; then our Sanctification; and then our Redemption.

Will you notice, also, that here you have the entire theme of the New Testament, in the order in which you find it in the New Testament. In the Gospels and the Acts we have what Christ began to do and to teach, and what He continued to do and to teach in the first generation of Church history. Then, in the Epistle to the Romans you have set before you specially what Christ is as our righteousness from God. Then in the Epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, you have Him specially presented as our sanctification. In the Thessalonians we begin to see more clearly His work in redemption. Some of the successive epistles, after that, are the links between the ideas of sanctification and redemption. Finally, in the Apocalypse He is fully seen as our redemption.

Moreover, these follow the events of the life of Christ. His deeds and His words and His practices, these show Him as the wisdom of God. Then come His death, burial, and resurrection: these have to do with our righteousness. Then His forty days' walk among men, His ascension up on high, the gift of the Spirit, and His session at the right hand of God, have to do with our sanctification. Then His coming again, which has to do with our redemption.

Now we take up the theme, Christ as *our wisdom from God.* In Isaiah 9: 6, you remember the five great names that are applied to Christ: "His name shall be called Wonderful," or "the Miracle," "Counsellor"—here we have Christ as our Wisdom from God—the "Miracle Worker," and the "Perfect Counsellor." There is a great difference between wisdom and knowledge. Some people who are wise know little, and some who know a great deal are unwise. Knowledge is information—it is an acquisition, an accumulation; but wisdom is a personal characteristic. It implies capacity and sagacity, even for the acquisition and use of knowledge; and so it is a greater thing to say that Christ is our wisdom from God, than to say that He is our knowledge from God. The Holy Spirit always uses terms discriminatingly.

Christ, as the wisdom from God, includes not only His words, but His works. His works are a part of the demonstration of His wisdom. That He should teach wise precepts, and that He should exemplify them in wise practice—these two together constitute Him our wisdom from God. He leaves us a pattern, an example, a writing copy; not only showing, in the writing copy, the beauty of His own life, but setting a copy for His disciples to follow, leaving an example for them to imitate. His work must necessarily begin as wisdom from God: for the first thing that we need is knowledge of the truth—knowledge of ourselves and knowledge of God: and this is exactly what He supplies as our wisdom from God.

There are three departments in which Christ shows Himself to be our wisdom from God. In the first place, He corrects our erroneous impressions; in the second place, He confirms our right ideas; and in the third place, He reveals things absolutely unknown before. In the Gospel narratives and in the epistles you will see distinctly these three lines of demonstration exemplified. In the Sermon on the Mount the major part of His teaching is a *correcting of errors* that had previously existed. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time"—by the men of ancient days—this, that, and the other thing: "but I say unto you." "He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

The scribes simply told people what was in the Bible, but He spoke as a Legislator who, having framed law, can not only interpret it, but can modify it if He pleases.

In this Sermon you have many examples of how He corrected the notions that previously existed, but which were erroneous conceptions of both doctrine and duty. He teaches the great truth that external righteousness is not to be depended upon for acceptableness with God; that, behind this external righteousness, there must be righteousness of heart and spirit and motive; and that external impropriety is not the main thing that God condemns, but internal lawlessness.

It is not the exterior, but the interior, that determines everything in the sight of God. For instance, it is not the murderous blow, but the hateful feeling. It is not the impure act, but the sensual lust. It is not the form of oath, but the fact of a profane spirit. It is not the writing of divorcement, but the very sapping of the foundations of marital fidelity and life. It is not vindictive resistance, but meek submission that is the part of a child of God. It is not the parade of piety in fasting and public praying, but the secret conformity to, and communion with, God.

The Jews had made so much of the institution of the Sabbath that they made man a slave to its institutional laws and restrictions. Christ says, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath," teaching the great lesson that man is always greater than any institution; that man is the master, and not the servant; and that institutions are the servant, and not the master. These are examples of some of Christ's corrections of wrong notions.

Now take a few examples of *His confirmations of right notions.* For instance, the Gentile centurion got hold of the great truth that the power of Jesus Christ does not depend upon His personal presence or touch, but upon His word and will. Therefore he saw what others did not see—that it was not necessary for Christ to come under his roof to heal the sick one; He had only to command it to be, and it would be. Christ at once confirmed and commended the man's faith as something greater than He had found in Israel.

The woman of Canaan got hold of the great truth that there is a grace and a love in God which deals even with outcasts; that He has something to bestow even beyond the promise; so that when she had no promise to rest upon, but rather threatening to dismay her, and when Christ seemed to carry out the curse of Canaan by His silence and apparent repulse, she still knew that she would get what she asked: and again He commended her faith as something wonderful.

Then when Peter got a glimpse, through Christ's humanity, of His deity, at once He commended the truth Peter declared, and stated that it was a revelation of God to Peter, and not one of flesh and blood. After the scribe's confession of the truth that to love God with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices, Christ immediately said to him, "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God."

Whenever the truth was declared, Christ confirmed it, and established it, and commended it. It was so even with the dying thief. People think of the dying thief as scarcely a believer; but I think he was the greatest believer that the New Testament gives us a glimpse of. That dying thief on the cross, one of the two who were crucified with Jesus Christ, when His disciples became discouraged and forsook Him, had confidence in His final triumph and glory. He said, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Hear the commendation: "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

A part of His work upon earth was *to establish Old Testament truths*, such as the new birth. When Nicodemus marvelled at it, the Lord said, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not"—things known to men who had already lived upon the earth (Ezek. 36 and Ps. 51)—"how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?"—things not yet breathed to men, but a new revelation. The birth from above was only the confirmation of Old Testament teaching; there was nothing new in it. Hence Christ said, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

Then our Lord brought to human souls absolutely *new revelations of truth*. That is a wonderful verse, 2 Timothy 1 : 10, ". . . who hath abolished death"—the Greek word is very strong: who hath annulled death, annihilated death—"and hath brought to light" —irradiated with new effulgence—"life and incorruptibility through the Gospel"—one of the most magnificent statements in the Bible. All we know of Christ's new revelations revolves about it. He abolished death, and brought to light the whole doctrine of eternal life and incorruptibility.

It is remarkable how Christ did reveal new truth that was absolutely unknown before. If you take, for instance, His pre-resurrection teachings, they centre about several things of great importance. First of all, He brought to men the knowledge of God's attitude to human beings. We learn something of God from nature, but only concerning His natural attributes—His eternity, and His wisdom, and His knowledge, and His omni-

presence, and His omnipotence, with a hint here and there of His goodness, which is more than offset by apparent proofs of malevolence, as in the disasters that are found in the universe, and in the awful suffering and sorrow and the fearful judgments that take place. If we confine ourselves to nature, we get no further than the Persians, with their good and evil deities, perpetually at war. We do not know anything from nature, or from human nature, about God's attitude toward a sinner, except that we fear it is one of absolute antagonism, as conscience seems to teach us.

But when Christ came, He first of all fully revealed *the attitude of God toward sinners*; and a remarkable revelation it is. For instance, He shows us that, while we think worshippers are seeking God, the fact is that God is seeking true worshippers (John 4: 23); that, while we think the sinner's business is to seek for God, the fact is that God is seeking the sinner (Luke 15); and that the only reason the sinner seeks God is because God seeks him. Of anybody who tells me about the world's religions, I would ask a question or two. Where will you find, in all the other religions of the world, any religion that teaches us these three great truths: first, that a deathless Man dies in order that other men may not die; second, that a holy Man is made sin in order that sinners may be made righteous; and third, that instead of humanity seeking to placate God, God is reconciled, and is seeking to placate humanity?

There is nothing like this in all the religions of the world, except the Christian religion; it is absolutely unique. That is what Jesus Christ came to show us—that God is yearning over sinners; that, instead of any necessity for our doing something to reconcile God, He is already reconciled, and is beseeching us to be reconciled to Him; He *has* turned toward us, and all we need is to turn to Him, and the reconciliation is complete.

Then, what a revelation we have of *the work of the Son*—that, instead of the sovereign of the universe coming to *be* served, the sovereign of the universe comes to serve! In John 13 you have one of the greatest pictures in the New Testament—the Creator of all men girds Himself with the slave's apron; and this is one of the two things that are most regarded by the Jew as drudgery —to unloose the latchet of the shoe or sandal, and to wash the feet. The only reason why the Lord did not unloose their sandals was because they had none on: they had been left in the vestibule as the disciples came into that room. The only other act of that kind the Lord could perform, was to wash their feet. There you have the Creator of the universe getting into the position of the veriest slave, in order to do the veriest slave-drudgery for His own

disciples. Why, you will find nothing like that in any of the other religions of the earth. I challenge them all to produce anything at all parallel to it. "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Think: He reveals Himself as coming to die for sinners, first of all, to save them from the penalty of sin; then to become the manna for sinners, to feed them in the spiritual life; then to assure resurrection and a blessed immortality, when death shall be emphatically abolished, and when life and immortality shall be perfectly revealed.

See how He came to reveal *the work of the Spirit*—first, in the world, to convict the world of the sin of unbelief. Without the Spirit we should never understand the sin of unbelief. We might understand the sins of adultery, blasphemy, and murder; but we should not understand the sin of unbelief, if it were not for the Spirit. Then the Spirit convicts the world of righteousness, because souls are dependent for it upon the Lord Jesus; and of a judgment, not to come, but already accomplished, in Satan being trodden under the feet of the majestic Victor, the Son of God.

Then see how He came to reveal the fact of *a divine Providence.* "The hairs of your head are all numbered"—not simply counted: every hair has its own number, and if one has disappeared a number has gone out of the list. What a marvellous thought it is!

And then what a revelation on *the new birth from above.* Nature is divided into kingdoms, and every kingdom has its own laws. One of the peculiarities about each kingdom is this: if you are in a lower one, you cannot get into a higher, unless the higher reaches down and takes you up. As the vegetable has to take up the mineral, or the animal has to take up the vegetable, or the human has to reach down and take up the animal, so God has to reach down and take up the human into Himself—that is the doctrine of the new birth from above. Everything passing from a lower to a higher kingdom must change its affinities and adaptations for the higher. As a fish must lose its scales and take on feathers, must lose its gills and replace them with lungs, if it is going to live the life of a bird, so we must have new affinities and adaptations if we are to get into a higher sphere and live with God.

That is the doctrine of the new birth; and in what Jesus told Nicodemus, in that respect, there was nothing at which to marvel. Jesus brings all the old doctrines to light in His pre-resurrection experience with His disciples. Then He unfolds the seven mysteries of the kingdom in Matthew 13, which it would pay us to examine during a lifetime. Nine-tenths of the people have no idea of what those seven parables mean. Those who are looking

for the conversion of the world in that chapter of Matthew do not understand that there are the tares and the wheat in the whole evangelistic age; there are bad and good fish in the same net. The chapter will unveil to any man or woman who will study it properly, the wonderful story of the kingdom, from its inception in the days of Christ, in the invisible and individual form, to its final collective setting up at the Second Coming.

Now look at His *post-resurrection revelations of new truth.* The first we have is in Luke 24, on the way to Emmaus, when He conversed with the two disciples—of whom, no doubt, Luke was one, and Cleopas the other. Luke tells us how Jesus unfolded to them, in all the Scriptures, beginning at Moses and the prophets, and including even the Psalms—the historical, the prophetical, and the poetical books—the things about Himself.

Have you ever asked whether there is any hint in the Scriptures about what He said on that occasion? If you will read Hebrews 3–12, you will find that those ten chapters are all concerned with the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament—in its characters like Aaron and Moses; in its ceremonies, and feasts, and fasts, and festivals, like the ritual of the old economy; and even in the structure of the tabernacle itself—they are all set forth in their relations to Jesus Christ, as the types of which He is the great antitype. This is the first great post-resurrection revelation, namely, that He threaded the entire page of the Old Testament; that it was all about Him, and all illuminated by His history and career. Then, if you will, you may take other post-resurrection revelations.

I want to set your minds, if you have never entered upon that line, upon studying the special mysteries that were revealed to Paul. He tells us in his Epistle to the Ephesians that things kept secret from the foundation of the world were first of all revealed to him by special revelation from Jesus Christ. Probably when he was in Arabia during those three years, the Lord Jesus was unfolding to him these great mysteries. There are six or seven of them, and it is very beautiful to study them. Let me call your attention to them as I pass.

There is the mystery of the revelation of God, in 1 Corinthians 2—that God cannot reveal spiritual things to the natural man, but only to a man who is spiritually enlightened. Then there is the mystery of the resurrection and translation of the saints, as given to us in 1 Corinthians 15—that some shall be raised from the dead, and that the living shall be translated and instantaneously changed into the perfection of His image. Then, again, the mystery of the body of Christ, in Ephesians 3—that Gentiles and Jews should be alike members of the mystical body of Jesus

Christ, and so one new man made out of what was twain. Then next, the mystery of the Bride of Christ, in Ephesians 5. That Adam should sleep, and Eve should be taken out of his side, made out of a rib of Adam, all indicated the mystery of Christ's sleep, and the Bride of Christ being taken out of His wounded side.

And then the mystery of iniquity, in 2 Thessalonians 2: 7—the mystery of the final heading up of all iniquity in one personality, the Anti-Christ, and his final overthrow. Then the mystery of godliness, so called in 1 Timothy 3: 16, which I take to be the mystery of the Incarnation, God manifest in the flesh. Then the mystery of the God-man, of two natures and one person, in Hebrews 1 and 2—nowhere else set forth in the Word of God, explicitly and exhaustively. That is one reason why I believe that Paul wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews—because no other writer of the New Testament deals with these mysteries.

Then, last of all, communicated to the apostle John, in the book of the Apocalypse, the mystery of Babylon the Great, and the downfall of our boasted twentieth century civilisation. All civilisation without God, from the beginning, has been stamped with His curse; and what men call improvement, and inventions, and progress, without God, seems simply to be the erection of a Babel tower, essentially idolatrous, and the centre of self-glory. It is a humiliating truth; and if you do not believe it, so much the worse for you. It is plainly taught us in the Word of God.

If you read Revelation 17 and 18, you will find all the things we are boasting about—our commercial supremacy, our martial prowess, our luxury, our extravagance, our inventions, our arts mechanical, and our arts fine—all presented there in Babylon, which is acknowledged to be "the great," even by the angel himself. But its greatness is not of God; and it is going to perish, not by external assault, but by its own rottenness, falling to pieces at last like a broken egg-shell. You had better come out of it, if you do not want to be involved in its plagues.

Now I want you to take, before I close, a far wider range. Paul says in Colossians 2: 3, "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Christ; and the Bible teaches us a great truth which most people do not see, namely, that Jesus Christ, from Genesis to Revelation, is the Wisdom of God. Old Testament wisdom and New Testament wisdom are all hid in Him. There is not a truth in the Old Testament, not a thought that is there given us in germ, that does not come to flower and fruit in the teachings of Jesus; and there is not any teaching that comes to flower and fruit in the teachings of the apostles and evangelists and writers of the New Testament, that has not its germ in the

teachings of Christ. So that, if you have Him as the centre, all the lines in the Old Testament converge on Him, and all the lines in the New Testament diverge from Him; and in Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid.

Notice that peculiar expression Peter uses in 1 Peter 1: 11, when he says, "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. There was not a prophet of the Old Testament times who did not speak by the Spirit of Christ.

Personally, I believe that the passage in the third chapter, "by the which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison," does not at all refer to His own preaching to them after His own death; but that it refers to the fact in the person of Noah, and by the Holy Spirit who guided Noah as a preacher, Christ preached to those who, in the days before the flood, were disobedient to the message. Because, if He had gone to Hades to preach to lost souls, Christ certainly would not have gone first to those who, for a hundred years, had had the opportunity of salvation, and had rejected it. He would have gone to some who had never before heard of salvation. It is a significant thing that the very class there selected are those who had had great opportunities, and had long grieved the forbearance of God by their resistance. But if you take the idea that the Holy Spirit, in Noah and all the Old Testament preachers and prophets, was the Spirit of Jesus Christ, then there has never been a prophet who taught, and there has never been a preacher who spoke, who was not speaking or prophesying by the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

If you hear Peter say that Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree, you will find it anticipated in John 10, about the Good Shepherd giving His life for the sheep; and in John 12, about His falling into the ground as a seed to die, that by His being lifted up He might draw all men unto Him. If you read Paul's doctrine of election, you may find the same in John 6: 44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Whatever you please to note in subsequent Scriptures of the New Testament, you will find the germ of it in Christ's teachings in the Gospels.

He seems to me to be typified by Aaron's rod. It swallowed up all the other rods, and His teaching swallows up all other teaching. Aaron's rod was the only rod that blossomed; and Jesus Christ's is the only teaching that bears the germ of all other teaching, and brings the germ of all other teaching to fruit as well as flower. Not only so, but I believe that Job, in chapters 28 and 38, when he talks of wisdom, really talks of Christ. And when, in the first

eight chapters of Proverbs, we are continually meeting with the wisdom that was with God at the beginning, when He framed the world, determined the deep, spread the atmosphere, and produced all the marvels of creation, I believe you have simply the abstract idea of which Christ is the concrete expression.

I love to think that my Master, the Wisdom from God, pervades the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation; that He is the one infallible Teacher; and that there has never been any infallible teaching, from the beginning until now, and never will be to the end of the world, of which He is not the divine source and inspiration.

I will give you a few examples, selected almost at random, to illustrate how practically wisdom affects our daily lives. Take, first of all, what Christ teaches us about *salvation*—that it is by faith, and that it is immediate. "This day is salvation come to this house." The moment you believe, you are "justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." "He that believeth hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."

Take what Christ taught us about *the childlike character*. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Ordinarily, in human life, we grow from childhood to manhood, and from manhood to old age; but in the Christian life we grow from manhood back to childhood, and from old age back to the cradle; there is a perpetual recurrence to childhood. Childhood represents, in its typical idea, four great qualities about which all virtues revolve: faith, hope, love, and truth. What are these but the centres of other virtues? Faith is at the bottom of trust and obedience; hope is the spring of all aspiration and courage; love is at the bottom of magnanimity and self-sacrifice; and truth is at the bottom of genuineness and loyalty to God. And so all the virtues of the child-life are the centres of the wider circle of virtues and graces. That is a new lesson taught us by the Lord Himself.

Then look at what He teaches us about *sanctification*. It depends mainly upon two or three things: first, prayer in secret—Matthew 6: 6 is one of the greatest verses in the Bible; it is the only verse I know of that has the singular personal pronoun in it eight times. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." In the verse before, the personal pronoun is plural; and in the verse after, it is plural; but in that one verse, it is singular—and what a lesson it conveys of the singularity of communion with God! You will never reach God properly if anybody else be present

even though it be your wife or your husband. There may be family prayer, and all perfectly proper; but secret prayer is the great power. The greatest need we have is to get alone with God, that we may learn to be alone with God, and to know that He is with us, though He be invisible—that is the great lesson.

Then there is love as a law. We are bothering ourselves all the time about laws; but Christ taught us to occupy ourselves with love. Love is the fulfilling of all the law. It works no ill to our neighbour, but favours every form of good; so that you may dismiss the whole decalogue, if you can only love. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." It is like Napoleon, who carried on his wars by the principle of the military square. You might approach in any direction, and you always found soldiers looking squarely at you. And God means that, from whatever source truth approaches, it shall find you looking it squarely in the face. Conviction, conscience, sensibility, will —the military square, compact, moving together, and presenting resistance at every point. You can never go behind that kind of man, because there isn't any behind; he is always in front. What great teaching! Just so with "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." You love yourself, because you put yourself first of all. But put your neighbour first of all, and you not only never do him any harm, but you wish to do him every good.

Then take the idea of *service*. The secret of service is a new ambition, not to be great, but to be little; not to be first of all, but to be last of all. It is one of the greatest lessons to learn in the world. "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." Put away for ever from you the desire to be great; instead of it, desire to be little. Oh, what a wonderful petition that is in the liturgy of the Moravian Church—it is found nowhere else: "From the unhappy desire of becoming great, good Lord, deliver us!" I think that might well be imported into other liturgies.

Then, take Christ's teaching about saving and losing life. "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it." What does this mean? Some people interpret it as losing the soul; but it has nothing at all to do with your soul. Life, there, is the sum of all your opportunities, capacities, and possibilities. You can use it for yourself, and lose it for God; or you can lose it for yourself, and use it for God. If you use it for yourself, you lose it for God; and by and by you lose it for yourself. If you lose it now, for God's sake, you find it for God's sake; and, by and by, you find it for your own sake. It is the seed of wheat falling into the ground,

sacrificing itself for the sake of the crop, and finding itself ten millionfold.

Take another lesson—*the reward of service.* Look in Matthew 10: 41, 42. Take two examples of it. "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily, I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." Here are two of the greatest principles of reward to be found in the Scriptures.

The Jews regarded the reward of the prophet as the greatest; because, while kings bore rule in the name of the Lord, and priests ministered in the name of the Lord, the prophet came from the Lord to instruct both priest and king. Christ says that if you do no more than receive a prophet in the capacity of a prophet, the same reward that is given to the prophet will be given to you, if you help the prophet along. Think of that, if you are inclined to criticise a speaker! If you help him to speak for God, and encourage him, you will get part of his reward; but if you make it difficult for him to discharge his office, you will lose your reward. It is a great thing to help a man who is seeking to do good. You should not regard his dress, his attitude, his manners, or his voice; but you should look beyond these things, and say, Is this message of God for me? Is this man a prophet of God to my soul? If he is, receive him, magnify his word and work, and get part of his reward.

Look at what is said about the giving of a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple. Perhaps you cannot give the cup, but you can give the water that is in it, which costs nothing but the dipping. If you give so much as the water which the cup will hold, to a thirsty soul in the capacity of a disciple, you will find it written in the book of God's remembrance that, on a certain day, you gave to a certain disciple a cup of cold water!

I think of two special lessons, as absolutely unique—John 7: 17 and 13: 17, "If any man will do God's will, he shall know of the doctrine"; and "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Put the two together, and you are taught three great principles. First, the scope of practice is knowledge; second, the object of knowledge is practice; third, obedience is the organ of revelation of truth. Now, just think about those things, and see how much they involve.

Take one other text, Matthew 6: 33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Now here God's great principles of dealing with us

are enunciated. The first of these principles is this: If you put the primary good in the primary place, the secondary thing shall be added unto you, without even your seeking it. And the second great principle is this: If you put the secondary thing in the primary place, you shall forfeit the primary thing altogether, and you have not even the promise that you shall obtain the secondary thing.

If you can find any wisdom anywhere else that compares with such wisdom as this, where is it to be found? You put the kingdom of God first, with His righteousness for yourself, His kingdom in its sway over others—put these first, and you need not take any care for the rest. God will take all possible care of your lower wants. But if you take your lower needs and put them into the place that ought to be occupied by the kingdom of God and His righteousness, you forfeit the kingdom and His righteousness for yourself, and may even fail in your diligent pursuit of secondary good.

II

THE GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

I SOUGHT, in our first study, to help you to find rest in Jesus Christ as your Counsellor, your Wisdom from God. Now let us ask that we may enter into rest with regard to His work as made unto us *Righteousness*. It will help us greatly if we can take the position of little children, and largely forget what we may have already heard; for much often needs to be unlearned, that we may take in the truth afresh.

The great passage about righteousness is contained in Romans 3: 9–26. The same truth is brought out in the Epistle to the Galatians. The Epistle to the Romans emphasises the righteousness from God's side, and the Epistle to the Galatians emphasises the righteousness from man's side—the righteousness of God, bestowed upon the sinner, in Romans; received by the sinner, through faith, in Galatians. Both thoughts are presented in each epistle; but the emphasis in Romans is rather upon the divine side; and in Galatians upon the human side.

First of all, I call attention to what may be an error in our mode of speech. We talk about our being clothed with the righteousness of Christ. I question whether that is a correct Biblical statement. Not that there is the slightest doubt that the righteousness of Christ is essentially the righteousness of God; but we must not forget Christ's mediatorial position—that it is through Him that the righteousness of *God* invests the believer. If we talk about the righteousness of Christ, we leave God the Father out of the question altogether, in our method of statement. Our hymns commit the same error—

> Clothed in His righteousness alone,
> Faultless to stand before the throne.

For the Bible statement, look at the following passages—Romans 3: 21–26; 2 Corinthians 5: 21; and Philippians 3: 9. Romans 3: 21, "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested"—notice the emphasis, "the righteousness of God"; v. 22, "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith

of Jesus Christ"—very marked; v. 25, "Whom (Christ) God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past"—not Christ's own righteousness, but God's righteousness; v. 26, "To declare, I say, at this time, His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Now notice 2 Corinthians 5: 21, "He hath made Him (Jesus), who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf, that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God." Then notice, once more, in Philippians 3: 9, "And be found in Him (Jesus Christ), not having mine own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

I always like to get a thoroughly Biblical foundation for every statement; and we must never lose sight of the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ stands between God the Father and the sinner; taking the sin of the sinner, and bearing it, that it may not separate between the sinner and God; taking the righteousness of God, and transferring it to the sinner, and investing him with that righteousness. It is no question of the equality of God the Father and God the Son, or of the equality of Christ's righteousness with that of the Father—which none of us disputes. It is the simple keeping of Christ in His place as Mediator between God and man, exchanging the sin of man for the righteousness of God.

Righteousness and justification are not synonymous terms. This is one of the errors that have crept into our theology—that righteousness and justification are treated as if they were exactly synonymous and equivalent. By no means. Justification is included in righteousness; but righteousness is much more inclusive than justification. The primary meaning of righteousness is rectitude; it is rightness—rightness of dealing, of judging, of adjustment; rightness of relationship, rightness of conduct and character. And then it comes to mean the investiture of righteousness, as with an attribute; and so it comes to mean acceptableness as righteous before a righteous God. Righteousness includes not only imputation, but impartation. Let us never forget that, when God justifies a sinner, He not only accepts him as right, but He makes him right; "that we might be made"—not simply accounted—"the righteousness of God in Him."

As I have said, the exhaustive treatment of this subject is in Romans 3; and, as we often find that, where God presents anything completely, it is in seven particulars, we find seven statements here about righteousness.

The prefatory remark is that, under the law, nobody is righteous. "There is none righteous, no not one." The whole world is unrighteous before God; and the whole man is un-

righteous before God—his lips, his throat, his eyes, his ears, his feet, his hands. Unrighteousness pervades the whole man, and unrighteousness characterises the whole world, so that the whole world is guilty before God, and every man is absolutely guilty before God. After this preliminary statement, there follow seven other statements about righteousness.

First, in v. 20: "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." That is the first statement—righteousness is impossible by the law. The moment a man commits an offence against the law, the law can never justify him. He may be a forgiven transgressor, or even a reformed transgressor; but a transgressor can never make up for past transgression. The law, instead of justifying, only gives us a deeper knowledge of our sin; instead of reforming, only provokes to disobedience.

As surely as God tells us not to do a thing, by nature we want to do it. Mr. Moody used to tell of staying in a home where, as he went to bed, he saw a card on the wall bearing the words, "Don't turn me round until the morning." He went to bed, but could not get to sleep until he had got up and turned that card round. In some such way the law brings the consciousness of sinfulness, and arouses the determination to do the other thing as compared with what we should do. Hence, it is not sins that God regards, so much as sin—lawlessness, the disposition to disobey. Righteousness can never come by the law: it is impossible.

The second statement is: "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets"—that is, a righteousness provided by grace, as the grand device of eternal love. It is apart from the law.

Here is the third statement: "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference." The righteousness thus provided is offered freely to all men as a gift of grace. One remark about the freedom of the offer of grace. Not only is it free to you, without money and without price, but it is a free exercise of the love of God. He was under no obligation. There is a fashion in these days for loose preachers to intimate that God was bound to save men. Nothing could be more nonsensical and semi-blasphemous. Grace is often called an attribute; but it is not an attribute. An attribute is an inherently necessary characteristic. Power, wisdom, truth, holiness—these are necessary attributes; but grace is not a necessary attribute, otherwise it would be no more grace. If God were bound to exercise grace, as He is bound to exercise wisdom, and is bound to speak the truth, and is bound to be holy, it would be no grace. But it is the very fact

that it is a voluntary exercise of love to which He is under no obligation, that constitutes it grace. What constitutes the glory of grace is that it is an utterly unfettered, unconstrained exercise of the love of God toward poor sinners.

Then again, we are told in v. 24 that it is through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The way in which it was possible was through the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, in His death, paid the ransom which purchased our redemption.

The next statement is in v. 25: "To declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God"—pretermission of sins. This pretermission of sins refers, some think, to the sins of believers under the Old Testament economy. It seems to me that there is very much wider thought than that. For the sake of the grace of God, made possible in the atoning work of Christ, God temporarily passed by all your sins as an unbeliever, to see how you would treat the atoning grace. If you accept Jesus Christ, God never returns to the sins He has passed by; but if you reject, He returns to those sins, and takes them up one by one, and brings you into judgment for them, together with the sin of rejecting His Son. In other words, grace procures for every sinner a new probation, an opportunity of accepting Jesus; and, if you accept Jesus, those sins passed by for the time being, are never referred to again; they are blotted out and are no longer remembered.

The next statement that is made is that this righteousness is imputed to us on the ground of faith alone: "Even the righteousness which is by faith of Jesus Christ." And the last statement is that the righteousness of God is preserved intact: "That He might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." God endangered His own righteousness in forgiving a sinner, except ample satisfaction were made to His broken law; and God could not compromise His character. He would not deviate from the track of His holiness one single fraction of an inch to save the whole universe of sinners: and the glory of this righteousness is that, while it saves the sinner, it saved God from all complicity with the sinner's sin. We shall never understand this now, but we shall understand it hereafter.

Now, let us go a step further. Notice why certain texts in the Old Testament stand out above all other texts as to their use in the New Testament. Let us look at them carefully. Genesis 15: 6; Habakkuk 2: 4—each of these is quoted three times in the New Testament, at the crisis of the argument where it occurs: and I do not know of any other such instance. Genesis 15: 6 is the first time we ever meet the words *righteousness*, *believe*, and *counted*; and they settle, by the way, the after-use of those words in

Scripture. We are told that Abram believed in the Lord, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. From that time forth, faith is always reckoned as righteousness. The other passage is Habakkuk 2: 4, "The just shall live by his faith." Each of these texts stands out in three places in the New Testament.

Romans 1: 17, "The just shall live by faith." Also in 4: 3, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Galatians 3: 6, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness," and v. 11, "The just shall live by faith." Now, notice in the Epistle to the Hebrews one more quotation of this prophecy of Habakkuk, "The just shall live by faith" (Heb. 10: 38). Then in James 2: 23, "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness."

Now, each of these texts stands at a crisis where it occurs, and you can remember the relation of the text to the epistle by the emphasis you place upon different words. Take this, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." When quoted in the Epistle to the Romans, the emphasis is upon *counted*, or *imputed*. In the Epistle to the Galatians the emphasis is upon *believed*. In James, the emphasis is upon *righteousness*.

Take the other text: "The just shall live by faith." When quoted in Romans, the emphasis is upon *just*. When quoted in Galatians, the emphasis is upon *faith*. And when quoted in the Hebrews, the emphasis is upon *live*. It shows how the Testaments are dovetailed together, that great texts like these, found in the Old Testament, are transferred into the New, and become the centres or pivots about which the arguments of the New revolve.

Now to return to the subject of righteousness. We have sought to emphasise a few great facts, so that right here in this tent this morning souls may enter into permanent and unshakable rest in the righteousness which is by faith of Jesus Christ.

Notice certain things. First, sin is a final forfeiture of all inherent righteousness. Second, righteousness must therefore be derived from, imputed by, imparted by God, or it can never be ours. Third, all righteousness is dependent upon union with the righteous God, through the mediatorship of the righteous Saviour. Fourth, the difference between the Adam-life and the Christ-life. The condition of Adam continuing in the favour of God was, "This do and thou shalt live"; the condition of a sinner being in the favour of God is, "Believe, and so live, and thou shalt do."

If we attempt to rectify our relations with God on the basis of the Adam-life, they are never rectified. The essential error of those who do not understand the great doctrine of righteousness is that they are always seeking to do something in order that they may live; that they are not willing to live first of all, by the

simple gift of God, and then to do, in the strength of the new life. By the way, I think that is one reason why the Old Testament Sabbath has given place to the New Testament Lord's Day. The first is at the close of the week as the natural period of rest after work; but the Lord's Day begins the week as a time of spiritual rest, to prepare us for spiritual work. People who continue to observe the Old Testament Sabbath have not got into the New Testament dispensation.

Notice, in the next place, "That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." We must never lose sight of those two little words, "in Him." "In Christ" or "in Jesus Christ" solves every epistle of the New Testament. It is the most important phrase, in my opinion, ever uttered by the Holy Ghost. What does it mean? Identification with Jesus Christ, and through Him with God the Father, and through Him with God the Holy Ghost; and that is the reason why righteousness is so far more inclusive than justification. Of course, if there is this identification between Jesus and the believing sinner, if they are one—he in Christ, and Christ in him—there cannot be anything less than justification. For if God does not accept and approve me when in Christ, He does not accept and approve Christ Himself. This is the teaching of the New Testament.

Of course, we are accepted in the Beloved. It cannot be any other way, because, when God looks upon us, He looks upon us through Him; and He never looks upon Jesus without seeing us in Him. Therefore, there is reconciliation. There is no alienation between God the Father and God the Son; how can there be any between God the Father and those who, in Jesus Christ, are united with God Himself? Reconciliation takes the place of alienation; and we, who once were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

And, of course, it includes preservation; hence that beautiful phrase in Romans 5: 10, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be kept safe in His life." The moment you believe, you enter right into Jesus Christ, and from henceforth you are surrounded by Him as a living presence; you are kept safe in His life; and you can never perish, because He can never perish, and none can pluck you out of His hand.

And, of course, it includes regeneration, for if in Christ you are identified with God the Father, so that you are justified in His sight, reconciled and not alienated, preserved and not left to fall away and perish, you must be a partaker of the Spirit, which in Jesus Christ dwelt in fullness. How can you be in Jesus Christ and not partake of the Spirit, which in Him abides as never He

abode in any human tabernacle before? And here is the great secret of regeneration: when by faith I enter into Christ, and become identified with Him, I partake of the divine nature which is in Him, by the Holy Spirit, which dwelleth in Him. In Christ I breathe the same breath that He breathes—reverently let me say it—and live the same life that He lives. Hence Galatians 2: 20, "I have been crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

Hence, we are to think of our righteousness as dating not so much from the Cross as from the sepulchre. The Cross was the finishing of the atoning suffering; but Christ went down into the grave, and rose from the dead, that we might have eternal life in Him. So we read in Romans 4: 25, "Who was delivered over for our offences, but was raised again with respect to our justification." We are to think of our justification as completed not at the Cross, but at the sepulchre, when He rose from the dead. Hence there is a new creation, instead of the old creation; the old things are passed away, and all things are become new. You cannot be in Christ without passing out of the Adam-life into the Christ-life, and without participating in the new creation, which is so remarkably and wonderfully manifest in Him.

And then this regeneration includes, of course, what is called adoption, or *sonship*. How can I be regenerated, a new creation in Christ Jesus, without being a son of God? Here comes in the true doctrine of the Fatherhood of God. We are hearing a great deal today of the universal Fatherhood of God and of the brotherhood of man. It is a dangerous doctrine, which quite overlooks the fact that, in the natural and carnal state, no man can be said to be a son of God. And why? Because he is not a partaker of the new nature.

There are three words in the Bible that may be like to each other, but are not the same. One is the word used by Paul in his address at Athens, where, quoting from a Greek poet, he says, "We also are His offspring." That is not the word translated "child" in Galatians; it is not the word translated "son." The one is *genos*, the other is *teknon*, and the third is *huios*. The first word means a product of creative power. We are His offspring, of course; we are the product of His creative power. The second word means a product of birth; and the third is the highest of all words, applied to Jesus Christ Himself, which means the fullness of sonship—and that is the word which is also applied to us. We cannot be regenerated and partakers of the divine nature, without being the sons of God by faith in Jesus Christ;

not simply products of creative power, but products of the new birth, and introduced into the high privilege of sonship.

Hence, of course, we have access, as we read in Romans 5: 1, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God"—that is reconciliation—"and access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." You are loyal subjects of King Edward the Seventh, but you do not think of having access to him personally.[1] If you went to Buckingham Palace and tried to approach him, you would find fifty attendants between you and him, disputing your advance; but, blessed be God, there is no one between me and my Lord. I do not need even a "priest" to interpose; nobody is necessary to introduce me, nobody to give me a letter of recommendation, nobody to go before me and prepare the way. Even the veil is rent in twain, and I can come boldly to the very throne of grace.

All this is the access of a son to his Father. What should I think of either of my sons if they had any doubts about their access to me? I should be ashamed of them; but I should be more ashamed of myself, that there were anything in me to make them doubtful. Is not the Lord ashamed of us when we do not avail ourselves of the privilege of our access to His dear presence? Just think of that when you pray: that in Jesus Christ you have just as much access to the Father as Jesus Christ has Himself.

All this involves also the idea of inheritance; therefore, over and over again we read that, because we are sons, we are heirs—heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. Inheritance is included in sonship. If you want to see the inventory of your possessions, read it in 1 Corinthians 3, at the close of the chapter. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas"—ministers of God—"or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." There are three steps in the argument—all things belong to God; all things belong to Christ, because all that is God's belongs to Christ; and all things belong to you, because all things that belong to Christ belong to you.

And, of course, glorification is included; therefore the apostle tells us that we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God (Rom. 5: 2). The same glory that the Lord Jesus Christ has, He tells us in John 17, He has given to us. No man would ever dare to say that, if the Lord Himself had not said it.

Now all these things are involved in righteousness—identification with Christ, justification through Him, acceptance in the Beloved, reconciliation, preservation, regeneration by the Spirit, sonship, freedom of access, a final inheritance, and absolute

[1] This was spoken in 1904.

ultimate glorification. This is what is immediately given to the child of God, because he believes in Jesus, and is, in Him, made one with God.

Now, a great many people stumble at predestination. By the way, what is the difference between election and predestination? Election has reference to the eternal past, and predestination has reference to the eternal future. God eternally chose us to an eternal destiny. When you find fault with predestination you find fault with God carving out for you a destiny as sons and heirs of the glory of Christ, about the most glorious thing revealed to us in the whole of the New Testament. It is what, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, cannot be understood even by angels, and principalities, and powers, until, in the great eternal future, it is manifested through the Church—the exceeding grace of God in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. But when angels retire into the rear, that redeemed saints may come forward and claim a share with Christ in the government of the universe, then they will understand, and you will begin to understand to what a glory God has predestinated you. Whenever you find fault with predestination, remember that you are finding fault with your own glorification.

In Romans 8, at the close, we see the heights to which Paul himself rose in the consideration of this subject. Begin at v. 33: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

What does all this mean? Heaven is as a court of equity in which anyone can lodge complaint against another, although that complaint may not be according to the technical points of law. Even the devil can there charge believers on earth with inconsistencies, and even with flagrant sins; and, alas, the charge is often too true: but what is the ground of confidence? That nobody shall lay anything to our charge. God has justified; and even the accusations of the devil do not avail when God justifies.

But the law appears in heaven, as it were, if we may impersonate it, and it says, "Here are all the past transgressions of this man; what shall be done with them?" But my great Paraclete stands out in court, and says, "All these transgressions were laid upon me, and I bore them in my own body on the tree." And the law, as my accuser, is silent.

But suppose that, although Satan cannot successfully accuse, and the law cannot successfully condemn, yet influences round about me may tend to separate me from the love of God—and any of us would be separated in a moment if He did not keep His preserving love about us—what, then, is our confidence? "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life"—that includes all things inanimate and all things animate—"nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers"—that includes all intelligences, human, angelic, and diabolic—"nor things present, nor things to come"—that includes all duration, past, present, future—"nor height nor depth"—that includes all dimensions, however deep or high—"nor any other creature"—well, if anything has been left out of the previous categories, it is taken into this. What is going to separate from the love of God, if nothing alive or dead; no intelligences of earth, heaven, or hell; nothing in the past, present or future; and no possible dimensions of height, breadth, depth or length—and if, in fact, there is no one thing in the universe that can do it, then what is going to do it?

It may help some of you if I put these things into a few proverbial forms. (i) The hopelessness of sin lies in the depravity of the sinner. (ii) The price of salvation is the death of the Saviour. (iii) The sphere of my safe-keeping is the life of my Safe-keeper. (iv) The secret of my victory is my union with the Victor. (v) The work of faith is to stop working. (vi) The end of self is the beginning of God. (vii) The glory of redemption is wholly due to the Redeemer.

III

CHRIST MADE UNTO US SANCTIFICATION

Our attention is now to be given to the rest which may be found in Christ as our *Sanctification.* This is a difficult subject to discuss, and I approach it with misgiving, for upon no subject has so much been said that is mystical on the one hand, and quite incomprehensible by the common mind, and, on the other hand, fanatical, and running to absurd and unscriptural extremes. Errors similar to those are common even in conventions like this.

The greater part of God's people, and even religious teachers, have exceedingly vague conceptions of sanctification; yet there is nothing more simple, and more within the compass of a child's understanding, than the essential truths taught in the New Testament about holiness. I therefore venture to leave much unsaid, that I may say some things from a somewhat new point of view.

We are told that Jesus Christ is made unto us sanctification, because all sanctification is dependent primarily upon His blessed work. It is through Him that we come into a sanctified state. But the main agent in sanctification is the Holy Spirit. I do not quite understand what is signified by our being sanctified by Christ's blood, unless it means *separated* by His blood. It is easy to understand what the blood means to do in atonement, "for without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." But exactly what is meant by the power of the blood to secure victory over sin is not altogether plain, unless it refers to the fact that through the blood that indwelling of the Spirit becomes possible which makes victory over sin a reality. Remember, then, that sanctification is in Jesus Christ, as dependent upon Him. I am identified with Jesus.

Regeneration begins the work which sanctification carries on. Regeneration is instantaneous, sanctification is gradual. It is a work, not an act; it is something to which there may be daily accessions on the principle of growth. This principle of growth is presented in the Word of God in three main forms: (i) in the mineral realm, if you please so to call it, as the building up of a temple, in Ephesians 2; (ii) in the growth of a plant, as in the

parable of our Lord, "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear"; (iii) then in the growth, as shown in Ephesians 4—growing up into Him, from infancy to the full stature of manhood. But in every case it is growth; it is advance by stages of progress.

Now, the main means in sanctification are three, which are very simple to understand: (i) The Word of God, as a lamp to my feet and a light to my path; (ii) the example of Jesus Christ as the exemplification of the principles of the Word; and (iii) the Spirit of God in my heart, as the living power that enables me to understand the Word, and to follow the example of the Lord Jesus. This is all perfectly plain so far; there is nothing in this mystical or fanatical.

The *motives* that prompt to sanctification, again, are threefold: (i) I am purchased by His precious blood; (ii) I am possessed by Him who purchased me; and (iii) I am indwelt by Him in the person of the Holy Ghost. These are the three motives—He bought me, and I should regard my Ransomer; He possesses me, and I should regard my Owner; He indwells me, and I should regard my divine Inhabitant. That is also plain. There is no mysticism nor fanaticism so far.

Now, as to the *stages* of sanctification. I conceive them to be plainly taught in Exodus 29 as three: separation, presentation, and consecration—separation and presentation being my own acts; consecration (in its highest sense) being God's act. We must get all spiritual truths from the child's point of view, or we do not conceive them rightly. We have neither knowledge nor wisdom, but must sit down before God's Word and ask, as a little child, that He will teach us the secrets of holiness.

Let us hear a simple allegory. Here is a maiden, in poverty, misery, wretchedness, and rags. A royal prince betroths her to himself. He changes her abode, and gives her a temporary dwelling separate from her former associations. He is going away to administer certain affairs about his kingdom, and to build for her a palatial residence; and then he is coming back to receive her to himself, and to take her to his home. Meanwhile he leaves with her an invisible attendant, perfectly competent to take care of her in his absence, and a book of instructions about the kingdom, which she is daily to examine and to study; he puts her into telephonic communication with himself, so that at any time he may be in touch with her and she with him on all matters wherein she needs guidance, support, and comfort: and he departs, telling her that he is liable to come back at any time, and that she is to watch and to wait for him.

Now, naturally, what would she do under the circumstances?

She would leave her poverty, wretchedness, and rags behind her. She would accept the book of instructions about the kingdom and the king, and study it perpetually and diligently, that she might be prepared for her entrance into the court and court life. She would not fool and flirt with any other man, would she? If she did, she would be treacherous to her king. And, above all, she would not walk arm-in-arm in the streets with persons who had been conspirators against his life, would she? She would separate herself unto her royal bridegroom; live in perpetual expectation of his return, and avail herself of the unfailing means of communication with him.

This I understand to be exactly what the Lord teaches us in His Word about the secrets of holiness. We are betrothed to the King of kings. We have been taken out of poverty, misery, wretchedness, and rags. Our temporary abode is the Church of the living God, with proper associations of worship and work, of adoring praise and prayer. The Holy Spirit is our invisible attendant and guide, in His absence. And we have in our hands the book of instructions about the kingdom and the King.

Prayer is our telephonic communication with the King on the throne; we can avail ourselves of it as often and as long as we please; and the more we use it, the more we shall learn to know the voice of the King, and to be very sure that He hears our faintest sigh. We are to keep ourselves from the world, the flesh, and the devil, out of whose associations and from under whose spell He has called us. And we are to remember that the invisible, indwelling Holy Spirit takes the place of Jesus Christ in His absence; and that He may be to the believer, for all practical purposes, all that Christ Himself would be in personal presence were He with us.

Now I am sure there is no mysticism and fanaticism in this. We can all understand this perfectly simple statement of the facts; and that is exactly what is contained in the New Testament, and outlines the scheme of God for the sanctification of His people. Every great element that enters into sanctification is in that very simple allegory, so that any child is capable of understanding the vital truths about holiness. If you take this statement of the condition of things, you will see how every feature of the New Testament teaching falls into its place in God's plan.

You want to know what relationship the Word of God has to your sanctification—it is the Book of instructions which you are daily to consult. You want to know what prayer is—that is your entering into the secret place, to speak to the Lord, and to hear His voice. You want to know what the relationships of the Spirit are—He is the invisible, indwelling Governor and Guide.

In the Epistle to the Romans the misery, poverty, wretchedness, and rags of the sinner in his state of guilt and condemnation are brought before us. His entrance into the new life of Christ, his incorporation into Christ, are found in chapters 6–8; and his presentation of himself to Christ is found in the beginning of chapter 12. In the Epistles to the Corinthians you have the invisible Guide, the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer. He forms the main subject of the two epistles. Then in Galatians, you have the new and holy walk of this affianced child of God, with the Lord Jesus, by the Holy Ghost. The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, these being contrary the one to the other; but the Spirit dominates the flesh, so that if you walk in the Spirit, you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; and your walk, during the forty days of your complete time on earth, will be a holy walk, such as becomes the affianced bride of the Lord Jesus.

In Ephesians, you have your attention called to His present home, and your future home, in the heavens; and you are there exhorted to make the future home practically your present home, by living far more in Him than you do in the greatest of earthly things. In the Epistle to the Philippians your attention is called to the fact of renunciation for His sake, which is more than compensated by the possession of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that your losses are all swallowed up in present and eternal gain.

In the Epistle to the Colossians, you are reminded that in Him you have all power and all riches; that is, the fullness of God is in Him, and the fullness of God is in you in Him. And then in the Epistle to the Thessalonians, you are reminded that He is coming back to receive you unto Himself, and to gather together all things in one—the living that are translated, and the dead that are raised, completing the final bride of Christ.

Thus far, it is plainly demonstrated that the simple outline of truth given a few moments ago is abundantly upheld by the wonderful teaching of these epistles. It is so all the way through, until you come to Jude, the last of the epistles, where, having been *preserved*, you are *presented* before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. That is the nuptials toward which the Bride looks forward.

It is so very important that we should see the bearings of the Epistles to the Corinthians upon this mystery of sanctification, that it is well to return to them. In 1 Corinthians 6: 17 we have the keynote of the two epistles, and to the whole matter of sanctification: "*He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.*" I know no more sublime statement in the New Testament. It is unity of the highest kind; the unity of one

spirit with another, where the two are so blended as to be merged—"one spirit."

If this be true, then it follows that the Holy Spirit of God, being infinite and divine, will, by His contact and co-operation with the human spirit, leave upon the spirit the impress of the divine attributes. The inspired writer boldly takes this high ground. If any great man of the past could unite his spirit to my spirit, so that we became one, then my spirit would manifest the attributes of this other, greater spirit, that took possession of me and dominated my own. If the Holy Spirit is joined to my spirit, then, in my measure, I must reflect, reproduce within my human limitations, the divine attributes. It is this thought that runs through the whole of the two epistles to the Corinthians.

For example, in the first, second and third chapters of the first epistle, it is the Spirit of wisdom reflected in the believer's knowledge and understanding of divine things. From the fourth to the tenth chapters, it is the Spirit of purity reflected in his separation from sensuality and idolatry. From the eleventh to the fourteenth chapters, it is the Spirit of peace and love reflected in his pacific relations with brethren in the Body of Christ, and in his attitude of peace toward all men. In the fifteenth chapter it is the Spirit of life so impressing him that he becomes, not only in spirit partaker of the eternal life of God, but even his body is impressed by this divine vitality, and though buried in the grave it cannot perish.

Turning to the second epistle, in the first and second chapters it is the Spirit of comfort, consoling in all our trials and tribulations. From the third to the fifth, it is the Spirit of light and truth communicating the knowledge of divine mysteries and becoming a transforming power in character. In the sixth and seventh, it is the Spirit of holiness, making impossible conformity with the things that offend God, and separating wholly unto Himself. From the eighth to the tenth, it is the Spirit of unselfishness, making us love to impart to others what we have received; whether it is in giving, as in chapters 8 and 9, or in service, as in the chapters that follow. Then from the eleventh to the fourteenth, it is the Spirit of divine patience, reproducing itself in capacity to endure the sorrows and the sufferings incident to our mortal experience and discipline.

Now, is not the statement that "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit" is the keynote of both these epistles proven; and that in the believer the Holy Spirit abides, and, being joined to his spirit, reproduces in his spiritual frames and experiences, as far as is possible, the very reflection of the attributes of God? Before we leave this, let me say that there are especially seven

aspects of the work of the Spirit represented, not only in the Epistles to the Corinthians, but in the Gospel narratives, and in the Epistle to the Romans, as to which we should be thoroughly settled in our minds.

(i) He is the *Spirit of Witness*. He testifies to Christ; He magnifies Christ; He glorifies Christ. He invests Christ with divine charms in our eyes, so that our hearts are enamoured of Him; so that, as when the sun rises all stars grow faint and pale and fade away, when He rises over the horizon of our being, everything else loses its charm.

(ii) He is the *Spirit of Truth*, in two ways. He illumines the Word, and He illumines the eyes that reverently read it. I heard the other day of a rationalistic critic who had lost his confidence in the inspiration of the Word, and was drifting toward infidelity. A godly woman brought him once more to read the Holy Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation, day by day, and every day to utter this prayer: "Lord Jesus, let You and myself read this Book together." When he got through, he had also got through with his higher criticism, and with all his tendency to infidelity. You get before God; let the Holy Spirit illumine the Word and your eyes, and you will never have doubts of the inspiration of the Word of God, if all the higher critics in Christendom should unite to say that you have been deceived.

(iii) He is the *Spirit of Holiness*, and is so called in Romans 1: 4, the only place in which He is so called. As the Spirit of holiness He creates in us holy affinities, appetites, and capacities.

(iv) He is the *Spirit of Power*. He transforms you into the divine image, working the greatest of all miracles—the miracle of a spiritually new creation.

(v) He is the *Spirit of Prayer*, or intercession, praying in us, and showing us how to pray; becoming the very breath of prayer, as it goes up into the ears of God. Hence any prayer that is in the Holy Ghost is bound to be answered, because, having proceeded from God, God, who knoweth and searcheth the mind of the Spirit, will not contradict Himself.

(vi) He is the *Spirit of Love*. He renews the spirit of your mind, so that the unlovely things—envy, jealousy, uncharitableness, hatred, malice—are all displaced by the flooding of the soul with the divine affection.

Last of all, and the secret of all the rest—

(vii) He is the *Spirit of Life*—called so only once, in Romans 8: 2. Did you ever think what that means? Because He is the Spirit of life, He is all the rest—the Spirit of truth and witness, the Spirit of holiness; He is the Spirit of power, the Spirit of prayer, and the Spirit of love. You cannot have any of these if

you do not, first of all, have life; for life is the fundamental condition of everything.

I have been reading lately of a remarkable thing that occurred in Philadelphia. It is the first time in history, I believe, that a dead nerve has been grafted upon a living one. A little child, four years of age, was brought to Dr. James Young, at the Polytechnic Hospital, who found that the left foot was partially paralysed, and that palsy had developed at eighteen months. He made an incision, and found the dead branch of what is known as the anterior tibial nerve, which forks below the knee, and controls the muscles that move the foot. The three-inch incision exposed the dead branch. Clipping this off close to the main stem, he opened a way to the corresponding nerve branch on the other side of the leg. In the living branch a slit was cut a quarter of an inch long. The loose end of the dead nerve was drawn across, inserted in the slit, and fastened with finest catgut, and the wound closed over. The operation took only ten minutes. In a month's time he said to the little child, "Mamie, can you move your foot?" And she did so.

This illustrates what God is doing in the process of sanctification, by the Spirit of life. He is grafting my dead nerves on the living nerves of Christ. It is life, first of all; and it is all else because it is life. Hence, the utter disaster of trying to be like God, until you have first the life of God. You cannot get it through baptism, nor through confirmation, nor even through reading the Bible and praying. It must be the touch of God communicating life. Then everything else becomes legitimate and proper, not as a means of life, but as an expression of life. There is no more suggestive name for the Holy Spirit, in connection with holiness than the Spirit of life.

With regard to God's great *methods* of sanctification, notice 1 Thessalonians 5: 23. These words take this question out of the realm of what is difficult to apprehend, and bring it down to the practical level: "I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless." Let us not change the order of the Holy Spirit, and talk of "body, soul, and spirit" being sanctified. That is beginning at the wrong end. It is "spirit, soul, and body." The spirit is the highest part of man, nearest to God, most like Him. The soul is next below the spirit, the realm of thought, feeling, desire, and resolve. And below that, is the body with its lusts, appetites, organs, and faculties. God's method is to join His Spirit with man's *spirit*, so that they are one; and that gives sympathy with God. Then that spiritual sympathy gives right thoughts about Him, right feelings toward Him, right desires and resolves with respect to Him. Through

the spirit controlling the soul, the soul controls the body. Thus, bodily lusts and appetites and passions come under actual control. But if you begin by trying to control your physical lusts, before you try to control your soul-life, and before you yield up your spirit into living union with the Spirit of God, you will be awfully disappointed. All you need is to be truly united with the Holy Spirit, and to give Him full sway in your life. Then, let Him command, through the regenerated spirit, the soul with its thoughts, desires, feelings, and will; and through the soul, reach down and keep the body in subjection. That is God's method.

Now let me give two or three hints as to *the snares* of sanctification. Sometimes I think that some of these snares are unwittingly set, even at Keswick, which is not an infallible convention.

In the first place, *let us get rid of wrong notions of love.* I am continually meeting with people who misunderstand what love means in the Bible. Love with them is a gush of feeling and emotion. Love, in the Bible, is never a mere feeling; it is a *principle*, it is the royal *law*. Your feelings depend much upon your health and your liver; but your principles need not be so dependent. Do you know that, if you eat something which disagrees with you, you "feel ill," as you say? Do you not know that if the weather makes you rheumatic, you feel depressed? What has that to do with love? Bless God, nothing whatever! Love is the principle by which I give God the preference over everything else in the universe. It is the principle by which I give my brother preference over myself—"In honour preferring one another"—and sacrifice myself for the larger interests of humanity. That is love; and it is not dependent on the condition of your head, your liver, or the weather.

You can maintain that love unchanged and unchanging in all physical conditions, however adverse. I find people perpetually looking back to some time when they had some sudden ecstasy, "Oh, I have lost the ecstasy, and I cannot get it back." It is better for you that you cannot, and that you learn to rest on something besides temporary emotional fervour. Let there be something as steady as the attraction of the magnetic needle to the pole; something that will turn to Jesus Christ, and will say, "Whatever be my emotions, whatever be the lack of the presence of what I call fervour and ardour, Thou art the centre of my soul. In all things Thou shalt have the pre-eminence." That is love. He cares little for your gushings; but He cares for your abiding, deep-seated, unchangeable preference and deference for Him.

The second thing is this: For evermore *get out of all snares of legalism.* You can never maintain the standing of grace if you come down to the platform of law; the two things are absolutely

irreconcilable. If you are going to look at your own states, love, sacrifices, and your own merit, you are insulting the work and the merit of Jesus. You are like a butler who has to bring the king a choice bunch of grapes from the grapery, but takes occasion, on the way, to pick the best of the grapes off the cluster and enjoy them himself. Jesus will have all the glory of your salvation; and if you are trying to heap up merit whereby to render yourself acceptable to God, you are robbing Jesus of the glory that is His due. Keep before you two passages of Scripture: "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1: 6), and, "Study to show thyself approved unto God" (2 Tim. 2: 15). You are accepted in the Beloved; daily study to be approved of Him.

The third thing I want to say is: *Be done with all your laborious efforts*. People come up here, get into an agony of wrestling, and come under high pressure, oftentimes by wrong conceptions of things. They think God is to be put into a state of siege in order that He may give blessing; while the fact is that God has been keeping *them* in a state of siege for a score of years, to get them ready to open the gates. Do not get things all turned round. God is more ready to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children. Abandon all laborious striving, all idea that anything depends upon the tremendous effort you make; and then, like a little child, open your heart to Him. Say, "Lord, I believe Thou art faithful. Thou hast spoken; Thou hast sworn by Thyself; there can be no mistake. Here I am." And just open your heart to the bliss.

But you say, "I don't feel any difference; it doesn't seem to make any difference at all!" Well, He is faithful, whatever your feelings may be. But you say, "I haven't any power." You have no need of power until you have occasion to use it. We do not get the Spirit here, in fullness, for the sake of parading about like a peacock, saying, "Look at me! See what a transformed person I am! Hear me speak, and notice what wonderful power there is in what I say! Watch my disposition! See how subdued and renewed I am!" That is all spiritual pride.

If you get the Holy Ghost in His fullness, people will likely see a great deal less of you than before, and you will see a great deal less of yourself than before. I have a friend in Glasgow, living on the banks of the Clyde, where they see the vessels, on their trial trips so far out of the water as scarcely to be in it. He says the reason you see so much of them is because there is nothing in them! But when they come back laden with rich freight, they are sunk so far out of sight that you can scarcely see them at all. If you are full of the Holy Ghost you will forget yourself,

and other people will forget you; but the power of God will be manifested, often unconsciously, through you and in you.

Finally, let me refer to Exodus 29. Over it may be written "the Law of Hallowing." In that there are three stages. (i) Taking Aaron and his sons and all things pertaining to the tabernacle, out from the ordinary purposes or possibilities of use. (ii) Presenting them before the Lord, and dedicating them to His service. (iii) God comes down in power and sanctifies *by* His glory what they had sanctified *to* His glory. The Lord, right here in Exodus 29, gives a lesson which is good for all time. What are you to do? Your act is very simple. Separate yourself from the things that displease and offend God, and offer yourself to God sincerely in self-dedication; and He will do the rest.

You cannot fill yourself with the Holy Ghost; no man can fill you with the Holy Ghost; no convention can do it. It is the work of God alone. It might be well to reserve the word *consecration* for *God's* act, and the word *dedication* for man's act. Only one power can consecrate, and that is God's power. I can separate myself, and offer, and dedicate or present myself; but only He can consecrate me.

If you will sanctify yourself to His glory, He will sanctify you by His glory. A separated and dedicated man, a divinely consecrated man, does not and can never be his own again. I understand that, in England, when you consecrate a building, if afterwards it is to be given to purely secular purposes the bishop is called upon to perform a ceremony called *desecration*, to take off the sacred character of the building, in order to give it over again to the purposes of the world. I think that, if we are going to live an unconsecrated life, we should, by all means, have a service of desecration.

Let us not insult God. If you have offered yourself to God, and He, by grace, has accepted your offer—as He always does—then walk as becomes a consecrated man or a consecrated woman, and do not give yourself over to the lusts of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, to the dominion of the world, and the control of Satan; but keep yourself unto Him, as a consecrated habitation.

IV

THE REDEMPTION THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS

GREAT as have been the unfoldings of truth in studying Christ as our Wisdom, our Righteousness, and our Sanctification, the subject now before us is far in advance of anything that we have yet considered.

The word *redemption*—the root idea of it is a deliverance from bondage, through a ransom paid. But here the emphasis is upon the *final act of dismissal* of the captive whose ransom has been paid—or sometimes the ransom is paid long before the actual deliverance comes, though the deliverance is assured when the ransom is paid. So, in our redemption, the ransom was long ago paid, but the full deliverance will not come until the Lord again appears, and until the conclusion of His millennial reign, and the final destruction of all foes.

Now we are to look at redemption in the light of the final consummation; and three or four texts illustrate this sense of the word. Luke 21: 28, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh"—manifestly a future event, having to do with Christ's second advent. Romans 8: 22, 23, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, . . . waiting for the adoption (or sonship); to wit, the redemption of our body." That is the final consummation. Ephesians 1: 14, "Until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory." The purchase has been paid, but the full redemption is yet future. And Ephesians 4: 30, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed (or 'were sealed') unto the day of redemption." The same thought is found in Titus 2: 11–14, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath had its *epiphany*" —has come out from obscurity, as the sun comes out from a cloud. The same word is used further on in these verses: ". . . unto the appearing of the epiphany of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." Redemption began with the epiphany of grace; it ends with a far greater epiphany of glory. Peter 1: 3–9 is the only place in the New Testament where there is a full explanation of a salvation that is *in reserve*, and "ready to be revealed at the

last day." Thus we have no real revelation of salvation, but only a *forecast* of it: the revelation is to come when Jesus Christ appears.

It is a curious fact that there are about eighteen or twenty words in the English translation, all of which have reference to this final result, and all begin with the letter "r." (i) Our Lord's *return*, Luke 19: 12, and Acts 15: 16. (ii) *Reign*, Revelation 11: 16. (iii) *Rule*, Zechariah 6: 13. (iv) Final *revelation*, 1 Peter 1: 13. (v) The Spirit's latter *rain*. There was the early rain of Pentecost; there is to be a latter rain, far more profuse than the former rain, James 5: 7, 8. (vi) The *refreshing* from the presence of the Lord, Acts 3: 19. The first refreshing was during His absence; the second refreshing is to come in connection with His presence. (vii) *Revival*, Hosea 6: 2 and 14: 7. (viii) Israel's *restoration*, Acts 1: 6. (ix) Israel's *regrafting*, Romans 11: 23. (x) The time of *reformation*. Some think there is reference to this in Hebrews 9: 10. (xi) The saints' *rest*, 2 Thessalonians 1: 7. (xii) *Resurrection* Revelation 20: 6, 1 Corinthians 15: 23. (xiii) *Reward*, Revelation 22: 12. (xiv) *Recompense*, Luke 14 ("My reward," Christ says; "your recompense.") (xv) The saints' *reaping*-time, Galatians 6: 7–9. (xvi) *Rejoicing*, 1 Thessalonians 2: 19. (xvii) The *restitution* of all things; that is, the accomplishment of all prophecy. Much is said about restitution which is unscriptural. The word is used only in Acts 3: 21, and there it means "fulfilment of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." (xviii) *Regeneration*, or the making of all things new, Matthew 19: 28.

It is a coincidence that all these words should begin with the same letter, and together give a complete idea of what the final redemption includes.

This theme is overwhelming. There is not a man on earth who knows anything about this! I certainly do not. It is so far beyond us that we have almost no data upon which to build our understanding of it. There are ten thousand things that we can understand in a measure, because there is something in our present life that corresponds to them. But, with regard to this final redemption, it is as absolutely impossible for us fully to understand it as for a blind man to understand sunshine and all the scenery of this magnificent world. We can only get a few hints of what is coming.

I. First, there is to be an *overwhelming display of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ*—a final revelation of grace absolutely incomprehensible, even to angels, at this present state of affairs. We are distinctly told, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, that God has reserved for the ages to come the revelation of His exceeding

grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus; and that this revelation is to be made not only to the Church, but through the Church, to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. So that the angels stand, as at a great chasm, and look down into it; but they cannot see the bottom. They stand looking up into the great height, and they cannot see where it ends! Even angelic intelligence is abashed and overwhelmed before the glimpse of this infinite and transcendent grace. It is a good thing for us to feel unable to talk about it, compelled to stand aghast before something that words cannot describe.

II. Secondly, there is to be *an unutterable glorification of the saints.* We have no knowledge of it, and we can form no conception of it; but it includes several particulars:

(i) There is to be a final and complete *emancipation from sin.* There will not be a thought, a desire, an emotion sinward, not a craving after anything unholy, no affinity with anything that is evil, and not a remaining taint of anything that is corruptible. There are several words used about this, as in Colossians 1, and in the end of the Epistle of Jude. We are to be "without blame," "without spot," "without wrinkle or any such thing," "holy, unblameable, unreprovable in His sight." Think of it—when the omniscient eye looks upon us at the last, He will not find anything that, to His immaculate holiness, can be so much as a pimple or a mole on a human face. How incredible!

We cannot understand this. It is far beyond us; and we should not dare to say it if the Word of God did not. The heavens are not clean in His sight, and the angels are chargeable with folly; but when He looks upon the final condition of the saints, He will be unable to find anything which He could even desire to be better. There will be, of course, a final assimilation to God: "We know not what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him." The apostle John himself confesses that we do not know what we shall be; it doth not yet appear. There is only one thing we do know—that we shall be *like Him.*

(ii) Then, there is to *be a resurrection of dead saints, and a translation of living saints, and an entire and final transformation of the body of our humiliation* into the likeness of the body of His glory. If all the wisdom of men were put together, it could not give one drop of information about this subject. Have you any idea of the capacities of the resurrection body? The only glimpse that you have of this, is in the body of the Lord Jesus Christ after His resurrection from the dead; and we know scarcely anything of that, save that it seems subject to entirely new conditions.

In John 20: 17, Christ says to Mary, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father, and your Father, to my God and your God." Yet immediately afterwards, probably within an hour, the women met Him, held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him (Matt. 28: 9). Why was it He forbade Mary to touch Him, and yet allowed the women, shortly after, to embrace Him and hold Him by the feet? If He referred to His ascension forty days after, His words and acts are unintelligible; but if He was about to ascend to the Father, and immediately to return, and if He did so within that space of time, all is plain.

On the great day of Atonement, there were four parts in the service. First, the sacrifice at the brazen altar; then the entrance into the holy place; then the presentation of the blood at the mercy-seat; and then the return to the front of the brazen altar, and the Levitical benediction. During the time that the High Priest was passing *with the blood from the brazen altar to the mercy-seat*, if he were touched by a human being he was unclean. It would seem that Jesus Christ was passing from the sepulchre, in token of His accomplished atoning work, into the presence of the Father, officially, as it were, to present the blood, and that therefore He could not be touched; but that He sped up to heaven, presented the blood, immediately returned to earth, and was then embraced by the women.

If that be the case, look at the possibilities it suggests about the resurrection body. *Thought* may then be *presence*. To think of any part of God's universe, may be to be immediately there. We may sweep through space with an incredible velocity beyond that of electricity or light, to do the errands of God in any part of His universe! We are overwhelmed with the suggested possibilities of the future body of glory. To have a body like His body, with the capacities of His body!

We have five senses now: we may have fifty then. We talk about music and say, "We shall sing these songs in heaven"—but the music of earth is not to be mentioned for an instant with the music about the throne of God. What is this music of ours compared with that? The best art is a botch and a blotch, and the best music is discord, in comparison with what is there.

(iii) There will be *the instant recognition of all saints*—no introductions there: we shall know each other instantly. We shall know all the saints—Abraham and Joseph, David and Daniel, and the patriarchs, all that have lived in all ages of the world. It is all indescribable; it is unutterable.

And then the gathering together of the saints in Him—think of it. We have, all of us, loved-ones whose bodies are buried in the sepulchre; and we talk about their lights having gone out. No, they have not gone out; they are burning more brightly. We talk about broken links: there is no such thing in God's economy; there is no uncompleted life that is lived in God. Our friends are all alive; and for aught you know, they are aware of what is going on today in Keswick, and interested, more than ever, in what is here being transacted. In the time to come, we shall all be gathered together. And there will be no death then, no sorrow, no crying, no pain, neither shall there be any more tears. There will be no night there, and we shall never be separated. There shall never be an open grave, nor a robe of mourning, nor a hint of separation, nor a taint of alienation.

(iv) Look at *the final compensation.* We talk of sorrows here; we shall forget them there, and shall wonder that we ever thought of them. We talk of sacrifices; there will be boundless compensations for every self-denial—ten thousand times, ten million times over, every separate self-denial will be recompensed for evermore. All our wearisome labours and vexatious trials for the Lord Jesus Christ, they will be swept away in a gulf of oblivion, and the memory of them will pass away. You think your service for God unproductive. You have been sowing seeds beside all waters and they have floated away; but God will take you to the great harvest-fields, with thousands and millions of souls, and He will say, "That is all due to the seed you dropped on the waters, in the name of Jesus Christ, which floated away and you never could find it again."

Look at Paul, writing fourteen epistles, and going through all the churches; look at the catalogue of his sufferings and sorrows, as given to the Corinthians and the Philippians. We are studying St. Paul's epistles today, in these tents; and thousands of people are being illumined and strengthened; and all this, in a sense, goes to the credit of Paul the apostle. Paul will be looking for all eternity upon the results of that one act of self-surrender, when he said, "Lord, who art Thou? What wilt Thou?" instantly following the Lord, wherever he was asked to go. The Lord will reveal, in all eternity, the incredible product and harvest of that one act of faith.

Many of us talk about our labours as being in vain and unproductive. Abide in Christ, and do His work; and you have nothing to do with the results: the Lord will take care of them. Ten thousandfold will you be recompensed for all the foundations you have been laying out of sight: here nobody but the Lord has known anything of the work, and when it seemed as if you

spent the whole of your time for nothing. The Lord will take care of all things; leave them with Him. George Bowen said before he died, "I do not know that I have led one single soul to Christ in India," and yet no man ever left a deeper impression for God in India. Never attempt to count converts; it is a dangerous business. It is a great thing just to labour on for the Lord, sowing the seed, and not to be unduly anxious about the crop; but to leave all that to Him. If you die without seeing results, you will awake in eternity to see them—perhaps far greater than many of which men boasted, and which were advertised in the newspapers.

(v) Notice, again, that the greatest of all the revelations about the future condition of the saints, is that they are to be *identified with Jesus Christ in His reign*—that is, those who "overcome." Not all saints are to be elevated to this position; this is for victorious saints. "*To him that overcometh* will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne." "Ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord"—not into joy *with* thy Lord, but into the joy *of* thy Lord. The joy of Jesus Christ is to be your joy, if you are an overcoming, victorious child of God.

III. Let us now look at the dark side of this picture—the indescribable *rout and ruin of all the enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ and of His saints.*

(i) *Antichrist* (2 Thess. 2: 6–10). When the Lord comes, He does not strike a blow at the Antichrist. The Antichrist, elevating himself as God, and gathering together the hostile remnant of earth against the Master, will go forth in the pride of his imagined superiority and power, to battle with the King of kings; and the Lord will destroy him with the brightness of His coming. Not a blow will be struck; but the moment that the Lord Jesus Christ appears, it will be instantaneous destruction. The Antichrist will no more stand before the lustre of that coming than the bats and owls of the night can stand before the morning sun. Nay, even that is no illustration: they retire leisurely, but he shall instantaneously perish.

(ii) All *rebellious humanity* will be included in this final defeat (Rev. 14: 14–16). The battle of Armageddon, when, under the control of demons, men shall be gathered together to fight against God, and shall be absolutely overwhelmed in a final and terrible rout.

(iii) There will also be the downfall of *Babylon the great.* That city seems to stand for a worldly civilisation in which there is no honour paid to God, and no regard for His glory (Rev. 17, 18).

(iv) Then there is the destruction of the *false prophet,* who is to be cast alive into the lake of fire.

(v) Then the destruction of the *devil* himself, and all his demonic hosts, as presented to us in Revelation 20—the final judgment upon the devil and the demons, who shall be cast into the lake of fire.

(vi) Then, finally, what no man can explain: "And death and hades shall be cast into the lake of fire." How can death be cast into the lake of fire? How can hades? It is literally impossible; but this must stand for the destruction of every enemy. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death"—better translated, "Death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed." What this means no man can tell: there seem to be suggested hints of a final practical elimination of evil from the universe, which we cannot reconcile with other texts of Scripture, and yet which we cannot get rid of. Here speculation is perilous, and it seems to be safest to concede something impossible for the human mind, now, to take in. But, somehow or other, God is going to bring out at the last a state of absolute moral and spiritual perfection.

(vii) Once more, there is *a mysterious renovation of the whole material creation* involved in this final redemption. Some passages of Scripture distinctly teach this. Take Isaiah 11: 9, "The sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the cockatrice' den." "And the cow and the bear shall feed; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox." These are the most ravenous, voracious, rapacious and teacherous of all animals; but they are here found together with the domestic animals. "And a little child shall lead them . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain," when that great consummation comes.

When man sinned, the earth was cursed for his sake. "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee." When Jesus went up to the Cross, He bore a crown of thorns, to indicate that the curse is to be lifted from the earth; and the time is coming when the earth is no longer to bring forth noxious and hurtful growths. There is to be a purification by fire, as taught in 2 Peter 3. As there was once a renovation of the earth by water, there is to be a renovation of the earth by fire. Scientific facts, which Peter did not know, and which have been revealed only during the last two centuries, show us that the air is composed of oxygen, the greatest feeder of combustion; and nitrogen to keep the oxygen

in check; otherwise everything would be burned up. Water is a compound of hydrogen, the most inflammable gas known, and oxygen, the greatest feeder of combustion. God has only to hold in check the nitrogen of the atmosphere, and to separate the hydrogen and the oxygen of the water, and everything would be destroyed with incredible rapidity, and the very water which now puts out the fire would be the greatest aid to combustion.

Then there is to be a new Jerusalem let down from God, out of heaven, having the glory of God. Here in this world, gold is a great hindrance to our vision of God. You get absorbed in the gold; it stands right between you and God, and it is opaque. But in the New Jerusalem gold is under your feet; it is very safe, if you trample upon it; and it is transparent, so that you can see God through it. There is nothing to hinder the vision of God in that gold of the new Jerusalem—a wonderful quality, that! There is not even a temple there, for the Lord God pervades it, and is the temple of it. And there is no light there, for God is the light of it; and the saints there will walk in the glory, honour, and beauty of it, in a perfect community of everlasting peace and harmony.

The old Babel sought to build a tower of earthly materials, and to reach up heavenward; but the new Jerusalem is built by God, of heavenly materials let down earthward. There is all the difference between God's civilisation and human civilisation. In Romans 8: 23 are the remarkable words, "We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now," and it is implied that the whole creation shall be delivered in "the adoption" for which we wait. The earth on which we tread is, in some mysterious way, to have a part in the redemption of God's saints. Probably, the earth is to be as much transformed as the saints themselves are transformed; and probably, after purification by fire, it is to constitute "the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." If that be so, we may come back to the locality where Keswick was, to remember all the blessings that we had here. We think it beautiful now, but how would it be when transformed by the glory of God! We may go back then to the place where Christ died for us, and stand on the site of the transfigured Calvary, and on the site of the sepulchre "Wherein was never man yet laid." We shall think of what He did for us, and that it was the price of His blood that bought this transfigured estate.

So there is to be *a final harmony of all things*, an unspeakable harmony; nothing that breaks into discord, not a note out of tune, not a voice out of key, not a heart out of harmony. This subject is so great that no man can speak upon it properly. There

are continual forecasts of it in the types. We look through the whole Bible and see types of the concluding scene in the great drama of the ages. The glory of Christ is typified in His transfiguration; the emancipation of the saint from all sin, in the year of release and the jubilee year; the final assimilation of saints to Christ, in the glory of Moses' face after he came down from the mountain; the compensation of the saints for all suffering and trial, in the latter end of Job; the resurrection and translation of saints, in the meeting of Moses (who died and was buried) and Elijah (who died and was never buried), in connection with the transfiguration scene; the final gathering together of all saints, in the Feast of Tabernacles as presented in Zechariah 14; the co-sovereignty of the saints with the Lord Jesus, in the happiness of Adam and Eve as co-equals in Eden, and faintly foreshadowed by Boaz and Ruth after their happy marriage in Judaea; the ruin of the Antichrist, in the judgments of Cain, Absalom, Belshazzar, and Judas; the destruction of the false prophet, in the defeat of Jannes and Jambres, who withstood Moses and performed miracles up to a certain point; the utter rout of the devil and his hosts, in Gideon's utter rout of the Midianites, and the slaying of Oreb and Zeeb, the last of the princes of Midian; the final death of death, in the resurrection of Jesus Christ to die no more; the final position of a redeemed earth, faintly forecast in the condition of the earth after the deluge, with everything evil swept off from it; and the final harmony of all things with the will of God, in the words of Jesus on the lake of Galilee, when He said, "Peace, be still," and there was a great calm.

"And there shall be no more curse," perfect sinlessness; "but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it," perfect government; "and His servants shall serve Him," perfect service; "And they shall see His face," perfect communion; "and His name shall be in their foreheads," perfect resemblance; "and there shall be no night there," perfect blessedness; "and they shall reign for ever and ever," perfect glory.

The pre-eminent question is, whether you and I are to have any part in that redemption. I wonder whether within the sound of my voice there is an unsaved soul. Are you going to be identified with that final rout and ruin of the devil and the demons and the hostile humanity? Are you going to have your part in the final destruction of the enemies of God? Or are you to have your own part with the saints in glory, as a citizen of the new Jerusalem as one of those over whom the second death has no power, who shall reign with God and with Christ, whose kingdom has no end?

I beseech you to accept Jesus Christ as your Saviour, and to take your stand with the children of God. If you will have your

part in this final redemption, stand up before God to claim that part, and we will be led in prayer by our chairman. Now, if you will take this Jesus as your Redeemer, anew, and will claim His full redemption for yourself—reverently, and by faith, let us stand before God.

IV

LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY

by the

Rev. G. Campbell Morgan, D.D.

1906

DR. G. CAMPBELL MORGAN

No name among preachers within living memory stands higher than that of Dr. G. Campbell Morgan. He was an expository preacher *par excellence*, who exercised a most influential ministry on both sides of the Atlantic. Tall, gaunt, with Roman nose and large, mobile mouth, he was a striking figure. Always immaculately dressed, he dominated every congregation he addressed by the dynamic and magnetism of his personality, and by the eloquence of his preaching. His rich natural endowments—including that greatest of boons to a preacher, a most melodious voice, to which it was a delight to listen—were subordinated, however, to the authority of the Word: it was his incomparable exposition of the Scriptures which drew great crowds wherever he preached.

Like Spurgeon, Campbell Morgan had received no formal training for the ministry. The son of a Baptist minister, he loved listening to preaching as a lad, and gave his own first sermon in the schoolroom of a Monmouth Methodist church when only twelve years of age. Those were days of spiritual blessing in Britain, flowing from the missions of D. L. Moody and Ira D. Sankey. While still at school, Campbell Morgan threw himself into evangelistic activity; and subsequently as a teacher at the Jewish Collegiate School for Boys in Birmingham, he became increasingly in demand as preacher and lecturer. At the age of twenty-five he sought entrance to the Wesleyan ministry, but was rejected. The door opened for him to the pastorate of a Congregational church, however—and thus he entered the denomination to which he gave such distinguished service.

From village chapel to an important church in Birmingham—and on to two of the most outstanding Congregational pulpits in London, and therefore in Britain: that was Campbell Morgan's route to Westminster Chapel, where his two periods of inspiring ministry will ever be remembered, and with which his name will ever be associated. While at Birmingham he paid his first visit to the U.S.A., and preached at Northfield, where an intimate friendship with D. L. Moody was initiated, which resulted in his becoming one of the most frequent and valued speakers at the great summer conferences there.

Campbell Morgan spoke frequently at Keswick and gave Bible Readings on several occasions from 1900 to 1937. He was never so closely identified with the Convention as most of its speakers, however: his ministry was essentially that of the Bible teacher—as he constantly insisted. He would attend the Keswick Convention as such, deliver his Bible Readings and addresses, but somehow stood rather apart from its essential spirit and teaching. Keswick stands four-

square upon the Word of God; and exposition of Scripture is central to every Convention. As a peerless Bible teacher, Dr. Morgan was cordially welcomed, and exercised a most memorable and fruitful influence. Of his several series of Bible Readings it is difficult to select one as being the best: those of 1906, on the Lord's Prayer, were certainly typical of his masterly expositions when at the very zenith of his powers.

I

THE PLATFORM OF PRAYER

By way of introduction to our study, I want to read the opening verses of two chapters in Luke's Gospel—11 and 18. "It came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, that when He ceased one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples." And: "He spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint."

These verses indicate the supreme importance of prayer. It is interesting, in this Gospel—which, as you will remember, is the Gospel in which the perfect Manhood of Jesus is supremely set forth—to find the words with which chapter 11 opens; because they reveal a consciousness in the minds of the disciples who were most closely associated with Jesus, of the part that prayer played in His life. I do not think there can be any simple and natural reading of those first verses without it becoming evident that they had watched Him at His prayer, that they had listened to Him praying—very often, in all probability. But upon this occasion He was praying "in a certain place"; praying, as I think, apart from them, and yet with them; for it is an interesting and remarkable thing that it is never recorded that Jesus prayed in any very close fellowship with His disciples. He moved upon a plane in His praying quite superior to any they could occupy. He never used, with reference to His own praying, the same words that He used with reference to their praying. His praying was always that of One who had absolute right of access to the Father's presence, and He spoke as being on a perfect equality with Him. But while that is true, they had seen Him pray; and there came a moment when some one of their number said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." But I do not think their desire to be taught to pray was born so much of the fact that they knew John had taught his disciples, as it was born of the fact that they saw the place prayer occupied in His life.

I should like to indicate here a very popular misquotation of this passage, asking you never to make it. The disciples did not

ask Him to teach them *how* to pray; they asked Him to teach them *to pray*, which is a much fuller petition. A great many people know how to pray who do not pray. The two things are included —both the habit, and the method and practice of prayer.

Well, there was borne in upon the minds of these men the absolute importance of prayer, by the revelation of what they saw of the place it occupied in the life of the Lord. Then, in chapter 18, we see our Lord's estimate of the absolute importance of prayer. The parable which we have in the beginning of the chapter was told them "to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint." In order that we may get the true emphasis here, we must put into comparison the things that our Lord puts into comparison—always to pray, not to faint. The simple and self-evident deduction is that—that the men who pray, need never faint. On the other hand, if a man does not know what it is always to pray, he is in perpetual peril of fainting. The two spheres of life are the powerful sphere of prayer, and the weak sphere of fainting.

Now, how did Jesus answer the request of His disciples when they said, "Lord, teach us to pray"? Immediately, in the eleventh chapter, by giving them a few sentences of prayer—not a complete prayer, which we find in the manifesto of the King, and to which we will be turning our attention—but some sentences, which are also to be found in the complete prayer, which we now speak of as the Lord's Prayer—or more accurately, the Disciples' Prayer. While that is so, you will notice that, there and then, He gives them two or three words about prayer, a few sentences, a parabolic illustration. But no one will imagine for a moment that, in the first and immediate reply of our Lord, we have His final and complete answer to the great cry of His disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray."

For, brethren, it is well for us to remember that we are always in succession to these disciples; that their requests are our requests, and His answers to them are His answers to us. Making all allowance for the importance of distinguishing between things that differ, matters that pertain to the specific message of the early days of Jesus and of the commission under which we serve, it still remains true, as in the great intercessory prayer chronicled in John 17, that He prayed for us. "Neither pray I for these alone," said He of the little group about Him, "but for them also who believe on me through their word." I always feel warmly near to the heart of Christ when I read that great prayer; for I know that He saw me also, and included me among that little company. As He there prayed for me with them, so also all His teaching for them was teaching for me.

I think I do not misinterpret the feeling of every one of us if I say that, while we have many things to say to Christ, we all feel that we want to say this to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray." If that be true, how does He answer the request? Our Bible Readings will gather around our Lord's answer to that request. I want to speak on the teaching of Jesus about prayer; and first, very broadly to state a line of thought.

In answer to that request, the Master first created *a platform of prayer*; He created a *new possibility of prayer.* In the second place, He gathered up certain petitions that had been quite familiar in Hebrew prayer before He came, and wove them into one perfect illustration of what prayer is, in that *pattern prayer* which we have in Matthew 6. Finally, in certain simple and yet sublime sentences, for evermore He revealed to us *what the life of prayer ought really to be.*

I should like to say that I am speaking for helpfulness to the youngest Christian people that are here. Very many know the secret place more intimately than I, from long fellowship with God therein. I do not hope to help them, save as the going over foundation positions is always helpful; but what I do want is to help, by the study of the Word of God, my youngest brother or sister to see how great a thing this is, how marvellously our Lord answered that request, how perfectly He answers it as we present it to Him. If we will but hear His Word and know His method and revelation, I think we shall go back from this Convention feeling that far mightier than any work we do in preaching or teaching is the work that is at our hand in this matter of intercession, in this great and holy matter of prayer.

Now, I need not stay to defend the possibility of prayer objectively. Let me simply state that we believe, all of us, that prayer has an objective value. We believe it because of the doctrine of God that we hold, because of the declarations of Jesus—many of them I shall not refer to in these morning hours—and, finally, because of the testimony of the saints in all ages. But now we come at once to ask and to answer two questions —at least, to ask them: and to answer them, so far as we may, by looking at some of the outstanding words that Jesus utters.

Suffer one other word which is purely preliminary. I can only take you to so many texts in a time like this. I am not exhausting the teaching of our Lord, but I am trying to bring you to some outstanding words of His in order to create for us our standing in prayer, the platform of our prayer, in order that He may answer that cry of our hearts, "Lord, teach us to pray."

I shall confine myself, first of all, to the Gospel according to

John. The simpler method for us is to read the group of Scriptures which we shall then attempt to look at together.

Chapter 1: 18, "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." Then in 3: 31–33, "He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and of the earth he speaketh: He that cometh from heaven is above all. What He hath seen and heard, of that He beareth witness"—and then one of those signs that characterise the ministry of Jesus, harmonising with the old prophetic word, "Who hath believed our report?"—"and no man receiveth His witness"; and, taking up the main statement, "He that hath received His witness hath set his seal to this, that God is true." Now, perhaps you will bracket together that verse in chapter 1 and the three verses in chapter 3, as constituting one group.

Then we will pass on to chapter 10, where there is a whole paragraph, from verses 7 to 18; let us take out of it certain words of importance. Jesus says at v. 10, "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly. I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep." At v. 17, "Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment received I from my Father." And in connection with that paragraph, turn to chapter 14: vv. 12–14, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto the Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask"—and you notice the word *me* here: "If ye shall ask me," and the marginal note, "Many authorities omit," and I propose to omit it—"If ye shall ask anything in my name, that will I do." Now, the paragraph in chapter 10 and the brief paragraph in chapter 14 again I would bracket, as constituting the second group of Scriptures.

Now for the third group, still in the fourteenth chapter, at v. 16, "I will pray (I will make request of) the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may be with you for ever." And all that follows is of great importance: but let us pass to v. 25, "These things have I spoken unto you, while yet abiding with you. But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you." My brethren, all these things concerning the Comforter are

intimately associated with that great charter of prayer in the earlier part of the chapter. They have their applications and bearings; but we must omit them at this particular point.

Then in the fifteenth chapter is the second Scripture in the third group, to which I desire to draw your attention: v. 16, "Ye did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it you." And v. 26, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, He shall bear witness of me; and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning."

I am profoundly conscious of the impossibility of dealing with all these passages; but I hope you will refer to them for minuter study. Let me gather out of them the simplest thought in each case.

In the *first* group, our Lord is presented to us as the One who has revealed the Father. In the *second* group, He is presented to us as the One who brings us, through His mediatorial work, into the presence of the Father; that we may stand in Him in the Father's presence, unafraid. In the *third* group of Scriptures, He is presented to us as the One through whose perfect and accomplished work the Spirit is given to us, to abide with us, to be in us.

Now, all these things have far wider application than that we are proposing to make in this study. The application is that, in these great facts concerning the mission of Jesus there is revealed a threefold fact which creates the Christian platform of prayer. The *first* is that He has made such a revelation of God to us as creates in our hearts a desire for prayer; the *second* is that He has done such work for us as admits us to the presence of God, in order that we may pray; and the *third* is that, upon the accomplishment of His work, and as its crowning glory, as its ultimate issue—for the present, at least—He poured forth His Spirit, that that Spirit may create our prayer as we stand in the presence of that God whom Jesus has perfectly revealed.

As we get hold of this great threefold fact, I think we shall begin to understand what prayer really means. I say, first, that the possibility of prayer is created by the revelation of the Father which Jesus came to give to us; and to say that is to be driven to ask another question. You may say to me: But do you think no man can pray to God save through that revelation? That is my own profound and deep conviction—that, save as a man sees God—let us begin there, reverently, and I shall not be misunder-

stood; forgetting the Mediator and the Spirit, and thinking of God Himself—a habit, I think, we need to cultivate, the habit of that loneliness in the Holy Mount, when we are with God Himself—but the only revelation of God that creates the desire for prayer, or makes man for a moment feel that prayer is possible, is the revelation that comes to us through Jesus Christ.

May I know *anything* of God, save through Jesus Christ? Yes, very much. It is quite possible for me to turn my back wholly upon the Christian revelation and yet to find God, in some senses. I find, as Paul said the Gentiles could find, His power and Divinity; and I can find God in nature, as intelligence and force; and it may be that I can see the harmony of these two things in nature. But I cannot pray to intelligence, and I cannot pray to force; and I cannot pray to intelligence and force working in perfect harmony and co-operation.

My own conviction is that, with the increased knowledge of the universe which has come to men during the past generation, prayer has become less and less possible to men. To me it is a very significant fact, and one to be carefully pondered, that men whose honesty we will not question, whose sincerity we will not doubt, physical scientists of a generation ago, such as Huxley, Tyndall, and others, did abandon prayer; and yet they all, in some way, told us that they had discovered behind all natural phenomena the operation of intelligence and force in harmony. It was *God* they found, but not the God to whom the human heart can cry in prayer. When I came to that first verse in John, I had a recognition of this fact: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." So that, by the way of Jesus Christ, there has come to men this new revelation concerning God, the revelation of His heart, the revelation of His essential essence, the revelation of His love.

And without staying to labour that, let me only say—if you tell me of force and of intelligence, I cannot pray. I can attempt to discover the law of the force, in order that, obeying it, I may by it be served; I can wonder and admire in the presence of the matchless, marvellous, majestic intelligence everywhere manifest in nature, but I cannot pray. But if I come to know that, behind the force and the intelligence, is a great, infinite and eternal heart of compassion, then, even though I am a bruised and broken man, flung out upon life's highway, I want to pray to that, I want to find my way to that heart. This, briefly and crudely stated, is the first thing Jesus came to give us—a revelation of this fact of God, the fact of His love. He did not come specifically to reveal the intelligence of God, although we speak a wisdom

which the world knows not. He did not come to reveal the forces of God, although we know the power of God in redemption, as it is manifested nowhere else. He came to reveal this fact of His heart, His infinite love; and out of *that* is born the passion for prayer in the soul of man.

But, brethren, if that be the only truth, and if we have only the first group of Scriptures, I cannot pray. For I say to you—and allow me to speak for a moment out of my own inner experience—it is when I come into the presence of God as love, that I know, as I never knew before, how vile and base a sinner I have been. I cannot speak for others. I commit no one else to this position or testimony; but Mount Sinai never made me tremble. Through the infinite grace of God, I was brought up in a Christian home, and I was reared in Christian surroundings. I have always sympathised with the young ruler who could say, "All these things have I kept from my youth up." But when, through the ministry of Jesus—I use the word in its broadest sense—I came into the presence of God as love, I found that in love was a light that made me bow myself to the dust in shame. Even though the fact that He is love makes my poor heart want to pray, yet I dare not take His name upon my lips to reach Him, the ineffable love, who has—let me say it reverently—who has denied Himself in order to help men. He has not denied His character, He has not denied His great attributes, He has not denied the fact of His holiness or justice; but He has denied Himself, and gathered into His own Personality the great and infinite pain. When I stand there, how dare I pray, if there be nothing else?

But, thank God, there *is* something else. And I pass on through the second group of Scriptures, again not tarrying to take up and examine them carefully; but you remember the tone of them. "I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep." Death and resurrection are in that sentence. He giveth His life—the mystery of His dying. Ah, but He giveth His life for the sheep in such a way that it becomes communicated to them. "No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." And so, in all the radiant splendour of the words of Jesus, I see someone who comes and stands between me and God, lays down His life, and, in the mystery of laying it down, sheds the blood by which I am cleansed from sin; and, in the might of His resurrection, communicates a life that makes me to stand in God's presence unafraid.

Many other Scriptures group themselves around this central thought. It is through the rent veil of His flesh that I enter the

place of prayer; it is through the mystery of His finished and accomplished work that I dare draw nigh. And I, who had felt the moving of God's heart as Jesus spake and taught in revelation, and was made afraid thereby, am now brought near by the mystery of His mediation, and, in the presence of God, am able to pray, even though I had been a sinner, because He laid down His life. When He said, "I go to the Father," in that triumphant 14th of John, He included in His going Cross, Resurrection, Ascension, and all the great work of which we correctly speak as the finished work of Jesus Christ. I seem to contradict myself, yet follow me when I say, I cannot pray now. You all know that Romans 8 comes after chapters 6 and 7; and you know that it is in Romans 8—which is the chapter of no condemnation and no separation; which is the chapter of the fullness of life in the Spirit—it is in that chapter the apostle says, "We know not how to pray as we ought." I think that there is no time in which a man feels less able to pray than when, having seen the vision of God through Jesus, he is made nigh by Jesus to God, and finds himself there. Some of us went last evening, and have been this morning, to the Mount with God. Is not that the moment when all your eloquence of praying ceases?

It seems to me that when a man gets face to face with God he says, "I don't know how to pray as I ought. What am I to do?" Ah, the word in Romans is only a black background to fling up the final privilege in great relief. He giveth us the Spirit, who maketh intercession for us. It is a great passage—the saints groaning in the midst of a groaning creation, understanding it; the Spirit of God groaning in the saint, and so creating the prayer of the saint. Here is the final fact that prepares for prayer—Jesus revealed the Father, and I wanted to pray, but dare not. Jesus becomes Mediator, brings me into the presence, and I can pray, but dare not. The Spirit of God sent forth by the Son into my heart begins to interpret in my inner consciousness the desires of God; I pour out His desires to Him, and I have reached the centre and heart of prevailing prayer.

Now this is the great platform of prayer; not the privilege of *an* aristocracy of the Church, but the privilege of *the* aristocracy of the Church—the whole Church of God. It is the great platform of prayer. For a few moments let me take you to the Epistle to the Ephesians. In 5: 1, "Be ye therefore imitators of God"—the word startles us, but it is the right word—"as beloved children." Verse 14, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon you." Verse 18, "Be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit." Again, there are a score of applications which I am not intending

to make; but I have just chosen three little words which mark response—imitators of God; awakening toward the light of Christ; being filled with the Spirit. Those three words indicate, among other things, the method of preparation for prayer on the part of the saint. I am not speaking of preparation for prayer as something spasmodic and occasional. I am always sorry for the man or woman or child who needs some specific preparation before he or she can pray. Some while ago I went to conduct special services in a certain town. The minister said, at the Saturday night meeting for workers: "If you want me to pray during the week, you might let me know the day before." I never let him know the day before. I don't want any man to pray who has to go through some process of preparation such as that. When I use the word "preparation" I mean the preparation of life that makes prayer always simple, immediate, forceful, and powerful.

May I try to state what seems to me to be the thought of the three verses in Ephesians 5, and the teaching of the New Testament, by saying that we are prepared for prayer in proportion as we are responsive in life to the great facts that make prayer possible? The revelation of the Father: if I respond to all the truth concerning God that has come to me, I am prepared for prayer. The mediation of the Son: if I am responsive, as far as the light has come, to the great facts of His mediatorial work, I am prepared for prayer. The inspiration of the indwelling Spirit: if, in my whole life, I answer the call of the Spirit, I am prepared for prayer.

If I respond, I say, to the revelation of the Father. You will remember one verse in which Jesus incidentally reveals, in the course of one great sentence, all the truth He came to reveal concerning God—one of the most matchless verses in the whole of His teaching in this respect. He said, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom"; and when we read that, first of all we are inclined to think—let me say it reverently—to wonder whether Jesus has not mixed His metaphors. "Fear not, little flock." Almost immediately He forgets, and says, "It is the Father's good pleasure"; again forgets and says, "To give you the kingdom." Oh no, He has not forgotten; the metaphors of Jesus merge, never mix. There was a perfect unveiling of thought in all that He came to reveal. "Fear not, little flock"—Jehovah is my Shepherd. "Father" is the heart of it—"Father's good pleasure." Jehovah, the Shepherd; Jehovah, the Father; Jehovah, the King. We do not come into the knowledge of that, experimentally, in that order; we always begin with the King; and behind the King we find the Father; and on the pathway through life we know the Shepherd.

But what I want to come to now is this: Am I ready to pray? Let me ask the question in another way: Am I responsive to the Kingship of God? Am I revealing the likeness of my Father, being an imitator of Him? Am I content with the pasturage that my Shepherd provides? Loyalty to His Kingship, likeness to His nature, content with His provision—these are the things that make us ready for prayer. My brother, can you really pray and hope to prevail for the coming of the Kingdom in the world, if it has not come to your own heart and life? That is the trouble with us, isn't it? Is it possible for me to pray that men may know the Father, if I am revealing in my attitude toward my brethren and sisters in the world an unkind and a critical and an uncharitable spirit? Is it possible for me to show the breadth and beauty and bountifulness of the Kingdom of God, if I am for evermore murmuring about the way in which He leads me? I must rest in His provision, be like Him in tone, temper, and disposition, and be His loyal subject, if I am to pray.

Here I am face to face with an impossibility: I can do none of these things. It is not merely the revelation of the Father that I have to respond to, but the mediation of the Son. How may we gather up the truth about that? Take one verse, 1 Corinthians 1: 30, in which we have the work of Jesus summarised wonderfully: "He is made unto us wisdom." I know there are different opinions as to the exegesis of this passage, whether the apostle names four things, or one including three. Personally, I think the latter. "He is made unto us"—that is the fact. Analyse the wisdom, what is it? Righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, covering the whole ground of Christ's work for me. Righteousness—Christ imparted to me as the righteousness of God, whereby my spirit is saved; sanctification—Christ imparted to me by the work of the Spirit, whereby my mind is being saved; redemption—Christ imparted to me in the second advent, whereby my body will be fashioned to the likeness of His glorious body.

These are the facts; but if I am going to pray, I must answer them. I must live in relation to the righteousness of God, which is made mine by the imputation of Christ; I must answer every movement of the Spirit by which He sanctifies me to the will of the Father; and I must live—yes, I am bound to say it—with eyes always lifted toward the East, for the dawning of the morning and the coming of the King. As I live here, in relation to the mediatorial work of the great High Priest, prayer will not be difficult. It will break from me when I do not know it, becoming the very second nature—no, no, the first nature of all my life. I shall be able to pray always, as I respond to the mediatorial work of Jesus.

And, finally, this word—I must respond to the work of the Spirit. I am not going to speak of the work of the Spirit in many of its aspects, but think of it in this aspect—what is the Spirit doing in me? Interpreting to me the agony of the world—all creation groaning, and the Spirit making intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered. Yet the Spirit always takes me back to Jesus. I go back, and I look at Him as He was (for He is the same), and I see that He saw the multitude, and was moved with compassion when no one else was. Why? Because He saw them in two ways—as God willed them to be, and as they were. It is that double vision of the multitude which the Spirit gives to us, through the anointing of the Christ-life, that gives—what? A passion for prayer. Is that all? If so, it is not the Spirit's creation. What then? A passion for sacrifice, service, and work. And the Spirit, in the believer, interprets the need of the world, makes real the resources of Jesus Christ, and then drives like a fire, in order that we may co-operate with Christ in the doing of His work.

Beloved, that is when you are ready for prayer. You are not ready for prayer when you are withdrawn from the world's sorrow and sin, in order to pray for it. I believe the old monastic idea was built upon a true desire, but its philosophy was false. If you take men out of the world's agony and sin, you cut the nerve of praying. *Live next door to sorrow*, in order to pray for, or to help, that sorrow. The Spirit brings us into sympathy with the world's sorrow and the Saviour's resource. Shall we answer it? You say, "Of course we shall." Brethren, by no means "of course." It is so much easier to hurry away from the slum and to live in the suburb. It is easy to say, "Do not let us see these things"; but if we answer the Spirit we shall stay by the need of the world's sorrow, and we shall pray. We shall pray in the centre of the Saviour's resource, and out of it we shall pray.

Then, in this final word: the great platform of our praying, God revealed; Jesus, the One who brings us into God's presence; the Spirit in us, creating prayer; our responsibility—and, if I have hurried that thought, I pray *you* not to hurry it, but let us face it, when we are alone—response to the great facts that make prayer possible; and that response will be, to us, preparation for prayer.

II

THE PATTERN PRAYER

Let us turn again to Luke 11: 1–4, "And it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, that when He ceased one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples. And He said unto them, When ye pray, say, Father, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone that is indebted to us. And bring us not into temptation."

Now we turn back to the Manifesto of the King, Matthew 6: 9, "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven so on earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil"—I resolutely omit the word *one* there—"deliver us from the evil."

Notice the place that this prayer occupies. First, in answer to the request of one of His disciples, made on behalf of all of them, that He would teach them to pray, our Lord gives them certain sentences out of the prayer, which you have fully in the midst of the Manifesto. I know that it is extremely difficult to arrange these Gospel stories chronologically, and I warn all Bible students against harmonies of the Gospels, except for reasons of reference, which are not very important; for the harmony of the Gospels is personal, and not chronological. But, so far as one may attempt that, some things are perfectly patent. I think you will find that the answer of our Lord in Luke was subsequent to the delivery of His Manifesto to His disciples, as chronicled in the Gospel of Matthew; so that, if that be so, then when they asked Him to teach them to pray, He took some of the sentences that were already familiar to them, and repeated them—not all, but some. We go back to the prayer as it is found in the Gospel of Matthew. We remember, first of all, its place. Think for a moment therefore, of those who had to use this prayer.

Now, I am familiar with the fact that many of God's dear

children seem to find some difficulty in making use of this prayer at all. I want to speak with all kindness, and with all respect for their convictions, when I say that, personally, I do not understand them, neither can I share them. I am not going to discuss all the reasons advanced against the use of the prayer by Christians. I have been told that we do not have to use the prayer, because we do not now need to seek for daily forgiveness. I am afraid that the people who say that do not know their own hearts, nor the nature of the debt and the debtor. Then, in the next place, I have been told that we are not to pray this prayer because the measure of forgiveness indicated here is neither the measure nor the basis of our forgiveness. That, again, is to forget that this prayer never ought to be breathed by man, woman, or child outside the kingdom. It is the prayer of the disciple. I should never imagine that we had any authority to tell a man who had never yielded to the King, that he must ask to be forgiven upon the basis of his own forgiving. It is impossible to begin with. We shall come to that point later; therefore I pass it by now.

But, in the third place—and with this view I have more sympathy than with any other—it is objected that this is not the prayer of the Church, it is the prayer of the kingdom. It is most important that we should maintain in our teaching the distinction between these dispensations and methods of our God, between the Church and the kingdom, and so forth. I am not going to discuss those distinctions now, but I want to remind you that when, for the time being, this day of grace (an interpolation upon the days and times and seasons of the ancient prophets, and of the Son of God)—when this day of grace dawned, all the principles of the kingdom were committed to the Church for keeping, and for manifestation. I feel it is because we have lost sight of this, that we have lost a great deal of power in all our work—missionary, evangelistic, and every other sort of work. That, again, I cannot discuss now. I would simply say that the facts of the kingdom of God—that being, as I understand it, the broadest phrase it is possible to use; larger, in some senses than "the kingdom of heaven" certainly larger than the phrase "the Church" in the broadest sense—all the principles of the kingdom of God are manifested in the world today through the Church, and only through the Church. The Church has a two-fold business—proclaiming the evangel for the gathering out of the Church of the First-born; and so proclaiming the evangel as to prepare for another age and dispensation when God, by other methods, will move on towards the restitution of all things.

Therefore it seems to me that this prayer is peculiarly ours, just

as the whole Manifesto, for the time being, is ours. That, also, is important. I pause one moment, because I am about to take the prayer out of that Manifesto, to say that the Sermon on the Mount is only obeyed and realised today within the Christian Church. It is the uttermost folly to preach it outside. Jesus never said to the promiscuous multitude, "Ye are the salt of the earth," never laid an ethic upon unregenerate man which that man was unable to understand and obey. To say that the Manifesto is only realised and obeyed within the Church, the place for the great prayer being avowedly in the Church, does not express all the Church's meaning. Our vocation, finally, is in the heavenlies; but our present vocation is here, and has to do with the earth. I believe most strongly that the taunt of being "other-worldly" is one of which we are altogether too much afraid. When the Church fails to be "other-worldly," it loses the power to touch this world in all its dire need. While that is true, we have also been in danger of forgetting our responsibility to the present world; and out of that has come our lack of missionary zeal and enthusiasm and endeavour.

Now let us turn to the prayer itself. There are some very simple things concerning its structure to which I desire first to draw your attention. You will observe that the Revised Version has omitted the closing Doxology. This I am not going to discuss, but I believe the omission to be thoroughly justified. I was interested to find a little while ago so conservative and saintly an expositor as Hengstenberg say there can be no doubt that the final Doxology was not in the original text, but it is so full of beauty that we had better leave it where it is. We all sympathise with that feeling, and I never omit the Doxology when using the prayer; but, for the sake of studying the prayer as Jesus gave it, we must omit the Doxology.

In this prayer, then, in the first place, there is a general invocation: "Our Father which art in heaven." Then, immediately following, there are six petitions. I should like to warn young Bible students against hunting for "sevens" in the Bible. When they *are* there, they are always significant; but when they are *not* there, do not make them. First of all, you have three petitions, ending with a qualifying phrase: "Thy name be hallowed, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done." I put them in that way, in order to indicate this—that the final phrase qualifies the whole of those petitions, and not merely one; and that phrase is, "As in heaven, so on earth." Then you have three other petitions, connected by the word *and*—"Give us this day our daily bread; *and* forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors; *and* bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil." Now,

I am not intending to deal with the details of these petitions, especially the details of the second three. I simply ask you to mark the fact of a first three and a last three. It is too late in the day to change our method of reciting the great prayer, yet I always feel the desire that our great congregations should recite it as it is written. If we cannot recite it in that form, at least we might form the habit of reciting reverently and slowly. Nothing has shocked me more than the way in which we get through this prayer. I like to have a solemn pause upon every sentence, so that we may think what we are doing as we pray this great prayer. When it has been prayed intelligently, there is nothing left that we can pray for; we have swept the whole realm of prayer.

Jesus has gathered into these sentences—all familiar to His hearers long before—and has put into perfect form the whole effect of prayer. First, three petitions; and then another three. What is the difference between them? You have noticed, of course, that the first three petitions have to do wholly with the purpose and the programme of God: "*Thy* name be hallowed. *Thy* kingdom come. *Thy* will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." You notice that the second three petitions have to do wholly with the probationary pilgrimages of His people: "Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors; and bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil." Without pausing any further, let me ask you to remember that, if we catch this structure and its significance, we have a philosophy of prayer which is of the utmost importance. It is this—according to the revelation of Jesus, prayer is not, first, a method by which I may obtain supply for my own need. Prayer is, first, the method by which God brings me into co-operation with Himself, for the accomplishment of His purpose in the world; so that the underlying principle of life is also the underlying principle of prayer. Just as Jesus said, in this self-same Manifesto, concerning the life of the subjects of His kingship: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you," so, when He gives me the pattern of prayer, He says, in effect, Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and these things of your need shall be added unto you. Test your prayer by that, and how does it come out? How many of us pray for everything that touches our own need; and, if we have a few moments to spare, we pray for the missionaries. Christ says, "First God's kingdom"; not a passion to be kept, that I may save myself, and get into His heaven presently—a perfectly right desire; but the first thing is a passion for the coming of His kingdom and the accomplishment of His purpose

in the world. That is the first, great, broad revelation suggested to us by Jesus, when we take up the great prayer.

I have already referred, in the previous study, to the wonderful verse in Luke: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Now mark how this works out in your prayer. You address your prayer to the Father, and pray first for the coming of His kingdom; then you pray for the provision of His shepherd love, for all the pathway of your pilgrimage.

Now, let us look at the first part of this prayer, which has to do with the purpose and the programme of God. Notice the bounding words found in the invocation, and in the qualifying phrase with which the three petitions end—"Our Father which art in heaven"; and the first petitions close thus, "as in heaven so on earth." The word that naturally arrests our attention is *heaven*, occurring in the invocation, and in the qualifying phrase of the first three petitions.

Now, we may seem to be making a digression; but I want to think of the word heaven for a moment in its use in the New Testament. Turn with me, therefore, to Matthew 6: 26, "Behold the birds of the heaven"—you notice the difference; instead of "of the air," "of the heaven," a literal translation: "Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them." Now turn to Acts 2: 19, "I will show wonders in the heaven above, and signs on the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke." Now, 2 Corinthians 12: 2, "I know a man in Christ fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not; or whether out of the body, I know not; God knoweth), such a one caught up even to the third heaven. And I know such a man (whether in the body, or apart from the body, I know not; God knoweth), how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

Now, you notice in those three passages the word *heaven* is used; and it is used of three distinct—now, I am quite at a loss for the right word, and I always am so—sphere? region? place? How shall we speak of the things which are beyond sense, in terms which are wholly of the senses? But find your own word; you see what I mean.

First, Jesus uses the word *heaven* for the atmosphere surrounding the earth. Then we find, in the Acts of the Apostles, that the word is used of the vast stellar spaces that stretch away beyond the atmosphere—"wonders in the heaven above, and signs on the earth beneath." Then Paul, in the Corinthians, makes use

of the term "the third heaven." He declares that he knows a man who was caught up into that third heaven, who nevertheless came back again to solid earth. I do not waste any time arguing about that. Someone asked the other day if I really believed that. When I answered that most certainly I did, there was the question, "How did it happen?" Well, you don't expect me to know more than Paul did; he distinctly tells you that he does not know whether he was in the body or out of it. I have mentioned it, in order to direct attention to a third heaven.

There are three heavens, then; but how they touch and merge is not the question. If we were discussing it speculatively—a foolish and dangerous thing—I might say that they all touch me at this moment. But if we like to think of them in sequence, there is, first, the atmosphere; second, the stellar spaces; and then, third, the heaven we speak of as the dwelling place of saint and seraphim—that place in the universe where God supremely manifests Himself to His worshippers, the third heaven.

Another word about this word *heaven*; the application is not yet patent, but we shall come back to it—we find this particular word (those familiar with the Greek Testament will at once recognise it) written sometimes in the singular number, and sometimes in the plural; that is one of the things which the translators have not always made clear. In all the instances I have read, the word is rendered in the singular; but you will find that the word is written in the plural when, Stephen being stoned, it is said of him that he saw the heavens opened. When it is plural you must, of course, decide by your context as to whether two or three heavens are referred to. When Peter speaks of the passing away of the heavens, he certainly means the first and the second, not the third; but when Stephen says, "I see the heavens opened," he certainly saw the whole of them opened. Those anointed eyes, baptised for suffering as well as for service, saw to the heart of the universe, to the very place where the light of God is supremely manifest; and there, at the heart of the light, he saw the risen Christ.

But now, to come back to our word in this prayer—why have I taken all this time upon it? Because I want to indicate that, in the invocation, the word is plural; but in the qualifying phrase that ends the first three petitions, the word is singular. So that, with perfect accuracy, Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father who art in the heavens. Thy name be hallowed, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done; as in heaven (singular), so on earth." Now, here I have two things which are, to me, of great value in my praying.

First, the incidental doctrine of God, with which Jesus intro-

duces the prayer—the fact of His immanence and transcendence, the fact that God is in all heavens. Now, those of you who are following me, with a new desire to pray, already feel the tremendous force of the prayer: "Our Father, who art in all heavens." Where is He? In all heavens. Therefore, He is close to me as I pray; therefore, He is wherever that is for which I am praying.

But is this true? What about the first heaven? Jesus said, Not a sparrow shall fall on the ground—and oh, do not spoil great Scriptures by misquotation! Do not say, "Not a sparrow shall fall on the ground without your Father's knowledge"—blessed and true, but partial. He said, "Not a sparrow shall fall on the ground without your Father." God is with the sparrow as it falls. What about the stellar spaces? "Because He is strong in power, not one faileth"; these all are upheld. What about the far-distant places of saint and seraphim and light? No argument is needed, for this is God's supreme place of manifestation and dwelling. In all these, He is. Then, when I pray here, I know He is—

> Closer to me than breathing,
> Nearer than hands or feet.

But I know also that, out yonder in China, India, Africa, He is; and I know that is saying the nearest thing about Him. The stars in their courses fought *against* Sisera, but they fight *for* me; for God is the God of the second heaven, as well as the God of the first. Out beyond I survey the infinite distances, and wonder what enemy may lurk in them beyond my ken. That was what Paul was doing in Romans, when he thought of the height and the depth. "Oh, no," he said, "God is for us—our Father, who art in all the heavens." The sigh of your need, this morning, dear missionary, far from loved ones, takes in the whole tract of the universe, and brings it into the service of your work. It seems to me that, if we see this one thing, we shall pray as never before.

But now, what is the prayer itself? "As in heaven, so on earth"—that is to say, I understand that when these men said, "Teach us to pray," and when, in the midst of the Manifesto, Jesus corrected false methods of vain repetition—for that is what He was doing, "Use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do . . . but after this manner pray ye"—I understand He was teaching us that one of the first purposes of prayer is to ask that on this earth there should be set up the order that exists in that third final heaven, which is without sin and without anything that is contradictory to the will of God. That is a broad statement, but

surely it lies in the petition, "Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done; as in heaven, so on earth." We are to pray for the setting up here of the heavenly order. Brethren, that prayer will never be finally answered until we are gone; but it is our business today to pray for the final answer, and to pray for that new dispensation when the King Himself shall come, and set up the rule of God upon the earth. But you may dismiss that if you like. Come back and see the passion of the prayer. Reverently, what does this mean? I think our mistake, very often, is to try and explain this ourselves; and we are so unfamiliar with the third heaven, that we had better cease trying to do it. We had better come back to the one light and revelation, if we are to understand the prayer that Jesus taught us.

Therefore, for one moment let us turn to the familiar word at the heart of the Gospel of John, chapter 16: 28. You all know it; it is the key to the Gospel: "I am come out from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father." Now, there is the key to John, not only as to its analysis, but as to its value. I am sure all of us will be agreed when I say that John has supremely shown us the fact of Christ as the Revealer. For instance, the word *heaven* never occurs in the Gospel of John in the plural number; it is always singular. John's thought of heaven is always that third heaven.

Here Jesus is seen no longer as the King, as in Matthew; no longer as the Servant, as in Mark; no longer as the perfect Man, drawn by the hand of the Greek Luke. But here He is seen as the Word made flesh; that is, the speech of heaven made articulate for man's ear. "I am come out from the Father," he said, "and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father." But, when He came out from the Father, there came with Him the revelation of the order of the third heaven; and, in Him and through Him, I know what the order of the third heaven is. Now this, again, I think, can only be seen for purposes of intelligent prayer, as we attempt to grasp the whole outlook rather than the details. Take these writings of John. You all know the familiar words of John. You may arrange this Gospel, or his first Epistle, or the second, or the third, and, perhaps, the Apocalypse, round the self-same three words, the simplest words of all in our language, and yet the sublimest—love, light, and life. Now, I do not hesitate to say that these three words reveal to us, in proportion as we hear them and understand them, all that we want to know of the order of the third heaven. I am sure you are agreed with me that it has been a great relief to think of heaven in some other way than the old one, with its harps, crowns, and robes. But it doesn't matter;

the thing of supreme importance is the order, the method, the nature, the life.

Now, you see, I cannot explain this; I can only fling the words back upon you, the words you know. Jesus brought us these words—love, light, life. "Oh, but," you say, "we had them before." Brethren, everything He said, we had before. He said nothing new, nothing absolutely new; He said everything new. You remember when He made the men's hearts burn within them, on their way to Emmaus, it was not a new thing. Oh, this age of "new things"! It was their own Scriptures that He took and interpreted to them, until the things that they knew best flamed with light and meaning. That was His whole mission: to take up the things that men had, and to make them see them. Therefore, I repeat, He gave us these words. In the third heaven, love is the one and only and all-sufficient reason of activity. Whether it be God's revelation to those who worship, love is the reason of it; whether it be the answering worship of those that behold, love is the impulse of it. Every note in the song of the seraphim, and every beat of the wings of the cherubim, is love-impulsed. That is the third heaven. And light is the intelligence that lies along the pathway. When love drives, I walk in perfect intelligence. Light and life afford sufficient energy for walking in the light, in answer to the impulse of love. That is heaven, as Jesus revealed it—love, the impulse; light, the intelligence; life, the sufficient energy. Whenever I lift my eyes to that far-distant place, and see it—not with eyes of sense, and hardly with faith, but always by revelation; in some moment of waiting before God, that is the whole story—all they do is for love; all they do is in light; and all they do is in life.

Then we turn our eyes back to this earth of ours, and how different it all is! Here is the trouble with the world, look where you will upon it; here is the thing that drives us out to evangelistic effort—that, whether at home or abroad, the story is not a story of love, is not a story of light, is not a story of life. It is not so yet, even to those who serve here. If love impulses, how often we blunder through lack of light! Even if love impulses, and we walk in the light, as yet, until the Advent morning, life is not sufficient to do all that love prompts! We all know what weariness is; if not, we are hardly Christian. No man in the ministry of Jesus Christ should ever put his head upon his pillow until he is tired out with toil. Any man or woman in the Church who does not know what it is to share the travail that makes His Kingdom come, is dishonest and disloyal to Jesus Christ. What is weariness? It is the touch of death. Press that touch a little further, and all the weary wheels stand still. But *there* they never grow

weary! Day and night, and "no light," perpetual, unceasing service; love driving, light flashing, life energising—that is the third heaven.

Now, listen. Jesus said, "You want me to teach you to pray; pray for that, here, in this world." That came out of His sense of the world's need, sorrow, and sin. Pray that on this earth love may become the reason, light the intelligence, life the sufficient energy, for the doing of the will of God. My brethren, can that prayer be answered? How shall I answer my own question? By reminding you of the One who first taught us to pray this prayer nineteen centuries ago. Measuring God's goings by man's time-table seems a foolish thing to do. Nineteen centuries ago there stood in the midst of our world one Man who, for a generation, perchance, lived absolutely and wholly according to the order of the third heaven of God. Now, one would like to take a long time on that, but I need not—you know the story. Can you find anything in the life of Jesus that is not love-impulsed? He could be angry. One of the weaknesses of our age is that we imagine He was soft, anaemic—One who could not be angry; but if you had been a Pharisee, robbing widows in those days, you would have known His anger, white-hot and scorching! But it was always love-impulsed; and that is where we fail. And light? He walked in light; He never asked advice, never. He had no council, no committee. I hold that all my brethren in the succession of the apostles could not form a committee to advise Jesus. He did ask them something once, when He said, "How shall we feed these people?" All right, my brother; but wait a minute. What follows immediately in your Bible? "And this He said to prove him; for He Himself knew what He would do." He walked in the light which fell straight out of the third heaven upon His pathway; He never hesitated, never faltered, never apologised; He walked in the light.

"Ah," you say, "but not in life." Yes, in life. How shall I put it?—His dying was an act; and let His own word be the testimony about it: "No man taketh my life away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Sufficient energy to accomplish the will of God—that is the order of the third heaven. Whenever I pray that prayer now, I seem to hear the words coming from His dear lips; and I say, "Yes, He lived that!"

How did it all end? What did the world say to it all? You have only to lift your eyes, and you see Calvary. The world said, "We will not have this!" In the Cross hatred murdered love, darkness put out light, and men bound in death murdered the life-giver. Ah, but that is only one side! That is the side Peter had in

mind when he said, "Ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay . . ." But there is another side: "Him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God . . ." And we know—O Master, help me to say it—we know that when hatred murdered love, the very spear that pierced His side drew forth the blood to save! That is love's answer to man's hatred. We know that when men put Him, the light, out in the darkness, there streamed from the Cross the light (blessed be God!) in which we live and walk today. We know that when He was murdered the mystery was met by the deeper, profounder mystery that He was laying down His life to take it again, to pass it to the men who, in their blindness and folly, had flung Him out. By that Cross this prayer can be answered.

For the moment, the Church is the depository of all the forces that are to make for that kingdom; God has other methods, but I am not going to deal with them now. But when we pray our prayer, the first thing is—passion for the coming of *His* kingdom. Brethren, this is to be not so much for the world's sake—that, as it seems to me, is where our evangelical truth has weakened today—but for God's sake; that God may win, that God may be vindicated, that He may get that upon which His heart is set. This is our prayer: "*Thy* name be hallowed, *Thy* kingdom come, *Thy* will be done. Thy name be hallowed in love, Thy kingdom come in light, Thy will be done in life—as in heaven, so here." May God, through Christ, "teach us to pray."

III

PETITION IN PRAYER

We come now to the second half of the pattern prayer—the three petitions which have to do with our present need as the children of God; those to whom He has committed for today all the truth concerning His great kingdom; those who are called upon to realise its principles, and to manifest in the world its beauty, its breadth, its glory; and those who are called upon to prepare for the new age that lies beyond the present, when the King Himself shall come and set up and administer the kingdom of God in the world. Now, I ask you to notice, first, the *place* of the part of the prayer that we are considering. It occupies a second place. I do not mean, by any means, that it is an unimportant part of the prayer; but I desire to remind you again that the first meaning of prayer is that we are fellow-workers together with Him, and that we are brought into a place of co-operation with Him as He moves toward the accomplishment of His own purpose.

Then we must remember, necessarily, that the second half of the prayer is dependent upon the first half. If I am first in prayer, as in life, to seek His kingdom, it follows necessarily and quite simply that I have no right to ask for any of these things contained in the latter half of the prayer, save as I have sought these described in its first half. But it also follows, and necessarily follows, that in proportion as I am seeking His kingdom honestly and sincerely in prayer, I may take these petitions with all confidence, and know that I have a perfect right to present them to that one Father whose Kingship is acknowledged and sought in prayer, and whose provision for us, as the sheep of His pasture, we may now seek. Now, I think that in these three petitions we shall see that the whole ground of our need is covered day by day, during this period of our waiting for our Lord and witnessing for Him. If you take any individual life, your own life as a child of God, you will recognise the fact that every day you are brought into relationship with three different worlds. I have to do, as a child of God, every day with God Himself. I have to do every day with men. I have to do every day with the devil. I am sure

you all agree to that, if you are living near to Jesus Christ. I touch—or there touches me, as you please—every day the great spiritual world: the upper, that in which God rules and reigns supremely in light and in grace; I have to do every day with this world, with the men and women that are about me; I have to do every day, in more or less degree, with the under-world of evil.

Now, those three worlds that touch my life every day, are all recognised in these petitions. I am inclined to say that they are all recognised in each petition; but that special emphasis of relationship to one, is the distinguishing note of each petition. Take them for a moment, and think of them just in that simple way. First, "Give us this day our daily bread"—and we shall see that, in this petition, there is a recognition of relationship to God, a recognition of relationship to our fellow-man, and incidentally, a very definite recognition of our relationship to the under-world of evil. But the supreme emphasis of this first petition is on our relationship to God. "Give us this day our daily bread," is the cry to God, the Life, for the perfect sustenance of our own life.

Then if I take the second of these petitions, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors," there is the recognition of relationship to God, which asks His forgiveness; there is the recognition of my relationship to my fellow-man, which is that of forgiveness; and there also is the recognition of my relationship to the under-world of evil. But the supreme emphasis of this petition—and I think this is borne out by the fact that it is the only petition of which our Lord gave any exposition or enforcement after the prayer—is the relationship we bear to our fellow-men. In the second petition I have the cry of the soul to Light for rectitude.

Then I come to the third petition, and it becomes perfectly evident that it deals with my relationship to God; for it asks Him, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." It recognises my relationship to my fellow-creatures, as you will see when we look more particularly at the word which Peter gives us. Let me name it in advance. We are to be watchful against our adversary, knowing that the same afflictions are being accomplished in our brethren which are in the world. But there is pre-eminent emphasis in the last petition on our relationship to Satan, and the under-world of evil.

If, having sought the coming of the kingdom in the first part of the prayer, I take these three petitions and breathe them out, taught of the Spirit, in absolute sincerity, I have uttered in the presence of God all that is necessary for the conditioning of my

life through any given day, in its relationship to God, in its relationship to man, in its relationship to the under-world of evil. It covers the whole of the fact of my present need. I put emphasis upon the word *present*, because we all understand that we shall not use the prayer when we have reached the Father's House. Like the songs of today, the prayers of today will have no place in heaven. Have you found any song sung here, meet to sing in heaven? I think not. We must sing the new song there; and I think we also shall have the new intercession there. But these petitions cover the need—I was going to say the commonplace need—of every day, touching us in the essential relationships of our life. And Jesus, in giving us this pattern prayer, showed us how, as we think of all the great forces that touch us, to make us or mar us, to hinder or to help us, we are to fling ourselves back upon that God whose kingdom we seek in prayer, as its first and most holy exercise.

Now may we take the petitions, then, and look at them one by one; just, of course, only skimming the surface of them. There is a word in the first petition, to which I desire to draw your attention, which I think is the keyword to that petition: "Give us this day our *daily* bread." What is that word *daily*? Now, I know that, in asking the question, I am coming into the realm of difficulty, in certain senses. By that I mean that expositors and evangelists alike are not perfectly in agreement. You notice that, in the Revised Version, you have as the marginal reading, "Give us this day our bread for the coming day." Now, where these scholarly exegetes differ, the plain man has a right to have an interpretation of his own; and I will submit to you at once that I think the marginal reading is altogether wrong. I do not believe, for a moment, that is the thought of the word *daily*. It is an interesting fact that this Greek word is unknown in classical Greek; that it occurs, in the New Testament, only here in this prayer and in the passage in Luke where our Lord again gives the same petitions from the prayer. The question of derivation need not here be discussed, but it is there that the difficulty occurs. Personally I believe that the word comes from that which would make it signify simply "*the bread of sustenance*, the bread that is necessary for the maintenance of our life."

There is another interesting question. I do not think it is of practical value, but I suggest it to my young friends who are Bible students. The question is, if that word occurs only here and in Luke, where did it come from? Now, this is speculation, and you may dismiss it as such; but I think that Jesus coined the word. "Well, then," you say, "do you suppose that He spoke in Greek?" Yes, personally I think so; largely in that dialect of

Greek in which, as I believe, the Gospel of Matthew was written. Dean Alford withdrew his former opinion concerning a Hebrew original, and adopted the view of a Greek one; and I am glad to find my view borne out by his authority so far as to justify the statement that Jesus meant, "Give us this day the bread we need for the sustenance of life."

Now, is He referring here to physical or to spiritual bread? There, again, is another question which is open to discussion. There are those who say that the word always referred to physical bread. So eminent and able an expositor as Dr. Weston, of America, who has been studying the New Testament for sixty years, with daily consecration, holds that the reference is to spiritual bread only, and that all the emphasis of this great prayer are upon spiritual things. With all humility—and I have mentioned him here because of my deep reverence for him as a teacher—I do not quite agree with that view. I believe that when Jesus here taught us to pray for bread, it included everything that is necessary for the maintenance of the whole life. I do not think that our Lord ever dealt with any department of human life to the exclusion of any other; but I believe that in this great prayer He says, in effect, "You are to come to God for all that you need for the sustenance of your life, physical, mental, and spiritual." And here He teaches us that we are to pray to Him, our Father, for the bread that is necessary for the maintenance of our life. You remember that in the solemn and awful hour of our Lord's temptation in the wilderness, the first temptation was, "Make these stones bread." What was His answer? He did not say that bread of the material kind does not matter, but He did say, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"; and there, by quotation from the old economy, He recognised the necessity, in every human life, for the physical and the spiritual. Then, as to the spiritual, you will remember that He said, "I am the bread of life, which cometh down out of heaven." So that here we are taught, first of all, to pray for what is necessary for the maintenance of our whole life in any day.

That prayer is to be presented to God, and we are to expect answers to it in the spiritual realm as well as in the physical. If any man should pray in the morning, "Feed me with material bread," and should sit and wait for the answer, it would never come. He must labour, after he has prayed; and the bread that comes to him is God's answer to prayer through the appointed channel of his labour. So also with the spiritual life. It is not enough merely to pray this prayer. You must pray it; but you must take up the Word, the bread that came from heaven, and

you must give time to know it, to study it, to meditate upon it. May I repeat something that Dr. Griffith Thomas said from this platform an evening or two ago. "Meditation," he said, "is attention with intention; it means the mind and the heart attending to the Bible with the intention of applying it to our own life by the exercise of obedience." There must be that meditation upon the Word which is attention with intention, if I am to be fed with the bread of life.

I ask you to remember that the first petition of the second part of the prayer flings me back daily in moment by moment dependence upon God for sustenance—for the sustenance of my spiritual life, for the sustenance of my physical life also. So that, of course, the first emphasis here is on my relation to God. But I ask you to notice that there is a social relationship indicated here. Surely you *have* noticed long ago that, while Jesus tells us, in this same manifesto, to enter into our inner chamber and shut the door, that there may be a certain loneliness in our praying; yet, when you have entered into your chamber and prayed the prayer, you cannot pray it alone. You may do so, as to actual bodily presence; but you cannot pray this prayer all by yourself. There is not one pronoun in the singular number in this prayer, not one; they are all plural—"our" and "us" and "we"—all plural.

Another interesting thing: only one of the pronouns is in the nominative case; and the nominative case is a popular case, as you know. We all like, alas! to be the subject of the sentence. You may become the subject of the sentence once, when you pray that prayer. When? When you say, "We have forgiven our debtors." The only right I have, when I stand in the presence of God, is to forgive the man that owes me something. So the social thought of the prayer is emphasised by the simple fact that, when I pray this in God's presence, I am compelled by the words my Lord has given me, to bring into association with myself in the presentation of need, all the family of God! You say, "Doesn't that include the man outside?" No; your business is to feed that man if he be hungry, whether he be a Christian or not, until you have helped to lead him to it. This is not the prayer of the man in the world. A question has come to me from a missionary; he says: "Would you teach this prayer to a new convert in some far-distant part of the world?" Yes, directly I was sure he was a child of God. Let him grow into its spaciousness afterward, but let him learn it at the very beginning. So we bring the whole family of God into this prayer.

Brethren, you see the lines which go out from it. When Peter described the Christian Church, by the Holy Spirit, in his Epistle, he spoke of her as being "an elect race, a royal priesthood."

What next? "A holy nation," and the Church has most sadly failed, at that point, to realise her nationality. There is no one Christian nation in the world; that "Christian nation" is the holy catholic Church of Jesus Christ; yet we almost utterly fail to realise ourselves as a nation. That line of truth I must not follow, save as I point out to you that it is suggested here. We pray as one family. We must go to God singly from day to day; but when I pray for sustenance of life, I cannot leave outside my prayer any who are members of the one Body, any who are my brothers and sisters in the life of Jesus Christ.

One other word about this petition. Notice how it conditions my life in its relation to the under-world of evil. It is the man who is fed with food sufficient, physical and spiritual, that is likely to overcome in every hour of temptation. We all know that to be perfectly true in the physical world. Therein, if I may so say, is revealed the subtle cunning of the Enemy's attack in the wilderness. He came in the moment of physical hunger; but thank God for the spiritual life that was so mighty and strong, so perfectly nourished, that it was able to overcome even in hunger. But for me—I need to be fed, if I am to resist. Important as is food for the physical life, think of it in the spiritual sphere. It is the man who has been to God for the sustenance of his spiritual life, at dawn of day, who has had broken to him, directly by God Himself, the bread of life; that is the man who is strong in the office, on the street, and everywhere, to resist temptation. How is it that so many of us fail and fall during the day? Because we are hungry men and women; our spiritual life is weak for lack of sustenance. Let us present this prayer and seek to co-operate with God, according to His law, for its answer in the sustenance of our spiritual life. By it we are made, not only to recognise our dependence upon God and to rejoice in it; not only to realise our relationship to our brethren and sisters as a truth, but we are made strong against temptation as we are fed.

So the first petition indicates supremely our relationship to God. Now we pass to the second, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." May I draw your special attention to the word *debts* here. Now follow on to that which succeeds: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (v. 14) Here are two words, *debts* and *debtors*. In Christ's exposition of His own meaning, or rather in His exposition of the absolute importance of that petition, He uses the word *trespasses*. I think that they are mutually illuminative; I think that by the use of the two words, He shows us what He means at this point. For my

own part, I should like to retain the words *debt* and *debtors*. Trench's definition of the word *trespass* is—a fall, whether the man who fell could help it or not. To me, that is a very important thing to remember. A debt is something I owe to God, even if I have not wherewith to pay; the coming short in my life of His high ideal, even though, at that point, it may not be wilful sin. Surely all of us believe that there is no necessity for wilful sin. We surely, all of us, believe that in the immutability of His grace and by the power of His Spirit, we can have victory the whole way through. But surely, also, we all—if we have had any vision of God Himself, if we really know anything of what it is to go up into the Mount with Him—we know how, taking our service at its best, we are unprofitable servants; at best, the offering of the life, perfect in obedience, is imperfect within; at best, we never can discharge all our obligation to Him—there is always debt. Oh, my comrades in Christian service, do you not feel this about your life and your service? I pity the man who, passing from service, is satisfied with his service. I pity the man who, at close of day, can say that his life has fulfilled his own ideal—the ideal born of comradeship with Christ; much less that it has fulfilled the divine ideal. Debts!

You will allow me to speak experimentally. I more and more realise, as I come into the presence of God—I come with boldness, I come with gladness, I come almost leaping for very joy—and yet I more and more realise, as I stand there, these debts, these shortcomings, the unworthiness of anything I can offer. Yea, even though I have Christ to offer, I am always conscious that I have so poorly realised Him. And I know that, while God accepts me in the perfection of the Beloved, yet from my heart, and from the tribunal which is set up within me by the indwelling of the Spirit, there is the perpetual consciousness of shortcoming and of debt. And so Jesus said, "Tell that to your Father, and ask Him for forgiveness." But upon what basis? "Forgive us our debts, for we also have forgiven." Now, as far as I may speak for myself, there is no petition in the Lord's Prayer that people are more anxious to get rid of than that. A lady wrote to me a little while ago, after some meetings I had held, and said, "I was rather troubled by something you said concerning that petition. Now, for the last fifteen years in my Christian life, I have never dared to pray it just as it stands. I have changed it, and now I always say, when I pray, 'Forgive us our debts, and we will forgive our debtors.'" And she added, "Don't you think that is sufficient?" I wrote back and told her, No; that, in our relationship with God, we had no use for promissory notes. I am bound to stay here a moment; for I should not imagine that I had any right to say

to a man who has never yielded to Christ, "If you will forgive, probably God will forgive you." God deals with us, first, upon the basis of absolutely free and unmerited grace; if not, there is no hope for any of us. But He does; He blots out—blessed word!—He obliterates sin, without any reference to what we are or do, save only that we turn our face to Him, with a change of mind and a simple faith. But once you and I have entered into the family and have now intimate relationship with Him, He says to us, "Your trespasses, your debts, are to be forgiven in the proportion in which you forgive the man that trespasses against you, and the man that is in debt to you." The figure must be disproportionate, for the proportions of the two debts are not equal; but you are to forgive in such measure as you are in debt to God.

The point is this: that this is a prayer for the family of God; for those in His kingdom, not for those outside. That being understood, we must insist upon it that no criticism changes it. I am far more afraid of the peddling criticism that accommodates some passage of Scripture to a low level, than of any other criticism in the world; and you have no business to take and change the phrase in any particular. You say, "If we are to come to the Father with such a petition, how often may I dare to come?" If you cannot pray it, you are not to come. "If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee"—listen, it is the word of the High Priest—"leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." I am not sure that this will not put an arrest upon a great deal of praying. Well, mine heart, my soul, it will be well to cease until I have obeyed this. But you say, "Isn't it an entirely new basis?" No; there can be no forgiveness of a debt so long as there is persistence in the thing which is chiefly wrong; and the unforgiving spirit in a child of God is the most heinous and most dastardly thing in existence. It is the one thing which supremely contradicts the nature which our Father has given us in Jesus Christ; so He halts us at this point. Forgiveness for debts —I need it, not only at eventide, but through the day, after every piece of service, and through all my life. He halts me, gently and severely, with the severity which is of the heart of goodness, and He says, "When you can say, 'I have forgiven,' then you may say, 'Let me be forgiven.' "

Thank God, I have not to leave that as a mere ethical statement! Thank God, I can say to you in advance what I wanted to say in conclusion: Christ is the guarantee of the answer. I can forgive if only I put on the Lord Jesus. If this prayer were all, I might shut the Bible and give up. If the Sermon on the Mount were

all, I would burn it and hurry from it. But, thank God, beyond the Mouth of the Ethic is the Green Hill of the mystery of the Cross, and the blood-shedding, and the cleft Rock, and the Resurrection morning, and the new life.

I cannot study this prayer, or manifesto, without bringing my spirit perpetually to Calvary. Oh, brethren, here it is! And we are not to let our rejoicing in the possibilities of Calvary make us forget that this is His great condition: "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." What is this we ask for? That we may be *loosed.* The figure is that of the loosing of a prisoner; and we are set free from our debts, from the responsibility, the guilt, and the binding nature of them. Then, you see, the relationship is indicated here—our relationship to God, as the God of grace, dependent upon the fulfilment of these conditions. Our relationship to our brother is to be exercised toward him, in the very spirit of forgiveness that God exercises toward us. Our relationship toward the under-world of evil is that of the indication of a way of perfect victory. You never—no, let me speak for myself; I never gain greater victory over the enemy than when, in the full tide of love, I forgive. There is nothing the devil hates more than a man who can forgive; because that man is acting in the very power of the life of God, which is triumph over evil.

I come, lastly, for a brief glance at the third of these petitions. And here I want to emphasise what I believe to be wholly important and true—that this is one petition: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." If you separate them, I think you create the difficulty which certainly does exist in the mind of some. People say, "What does this mean, 'Lead us not into temptation'?" I think we may summarise the meaning of temptation, if we take it as saying that our Lord indicates what our attitude ought to be toward evil—first, that of caution; and, secondly, that of courage. "Lead us not into temptation" recognises the fierceness of temptation, the terrible experience of temptation; but "deliver us from evil" recognises the most important need of all.

I think it is as though our Lord intended that we should say this in our praying, "Oh, lead us not into temptation. We dread it, we are frail, we are conscious of the searching nature of temptation and of our own frailty. But there is something more important than that we should escape the testing, and the more important thing is that we should be delivered from evil. If it be possible, apart from the process of the testing, let us be delivered from evil; but, if not, then let us be delivered from the evil." That is the supreme matter in this petition. So that I think

the emphasis of the last petition is not upon just asking that we may escape the process of temptation, but it is upon the asking that we may be delivered from the whole power of evil—"the evil one," if you so please; but I, personally, prefer "the evil." That is the supreme thing—that we should be delivered from the evil.

Now, brethren, notice this petition; for, to me, it is one full of comfort. First of all, the relationship to God which is suggested by it. I am flung back upon God, when I pray this, even in the matter of temptation. The Lord teaches me here that all that under-world of evil which tries and tests me, is under the control of God; absolutely under the control of God. God does not tempt any man with evil; evil is permitted to tempt a man, but never outside the realm of divine government. If I am yielded to God, if I am subject to Him, if I am in His Kingdom, then evil itself is over-governed by God; and I am not to be tempted above that I am able to bear. He will suffer no temptation to come to me but that He will also, with the temptation, provide a way of escape. It is a comfort, also, as I think this, of God's relation to the devil and to the under-world of evil. "Simon, Simon, Satan hath obtained all of you (the plural) by asking, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee"—not that our Lord had not prayed for the others; but He was dealing with Simon's individual necessity—"that thy faith fail not." Let all the figures fall back except three—Peter, Satan, and Jesus; one single man stands there, and two persons praying about him. "Satan hath obtained you, by asking"—Satan, the adversary, obtaining him by asking God—"that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee." (Hallelujah!) "Over against the adversary's asking is my asking. Over against the asking of the enemy, that he may have his opportunity to try and sift, is my asking that thy faith may not fail." Peter's courage failed, and his hope failed; but his faith in the Person of Jesus—never. You see, the Lord set His asking over against the asking of Satan; and, if you will go back in the Bible, you will find it all over again.

Come back to Job, and there is the story of it. What is the story of Job? This, for the purpose of our present study: that the devil cannot touch a single hair on the head of a saint, or a single camel that belongs to a saint, until he has asked leave! That is the whole lesson of Job. Oh, how I thank God for it; but it is true! "Lead us not into temptation"—we fear the foe. Do not be foolhardy enough to under-value the force of the foe; do not forget the subtlety of the foe, and the tremendous resources of the foe. Do not over-rate it; do not imagine he is omnipresent, omniscient, or omnipotent—he is none of these things. But do

not under-value your foe. Therefore, when you face the day and think that the forces of evil are marshalled against you because you are the child of God, breathe this prayer, the prayer of great cautiousness, "Lead us not into temptation, but, oh, deliver us from the evil!"; and so recognise that Satan himself is under the control of God, with regard to you, the child of God.

Strange and startling as the statement may be, yet I make it: to the souls who are trusting God, who are living in relationship to God through Jesus Christ, the devil himself is turned into an instrument for fashioning saints after the pattern of God's likeness. All the forces of the under-world of evil, surging against us, marshalled by the prince of darkness, only help temper the steel and make mightier the life and more perfect the likeness to Jesus Christ! Go to God about the under-world of evil. Do not forget it; do not stay parleying on any highway with the devil, starting an argument with him; for he is considerably wiser and more subtle than you are. Remember that we are always to enter into the place of temptation in the spirit of a great cautiousness, and yet in the spirit of the courage which says, "At all costs, deliver us from the evil." May I reverently ask you to look, when you are at leisure, at Luke 22. You will find that, just as our Lord is withdrawing from the little group of men whom He had taken inside the Garden, He says this to them, "Pray"—not, lest ye enter into temptation, but "that ye enter not into temptation." It is the same when He comes back from the moments of solemn and awful withdrawal from their company; He says again, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."

What lies between these two solemn words of Jesus? His own going down to Gethsemane, in which going down there are things far fuller than that to which I make reference by one thought. When we find Him there, what do we hear Him saying? This—"Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt." I think the underlying thought in that prayer, the underlying method of that prayer, is, "Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from the evil." "Oh, if I may but miss"—it means more than this to Jesus, mind; do not think that I am attempting to exhaust it—"if I may but miss the process of testing that is coming, as the Enemy marshals himself and his hosts against my soul; if it be possible: nevertheless, not escape pre-eminently, but victory, victory over evil, the doing of Thy will"; and it meant infinitely more in the case of Jesus, than it ever can mean in my case—"fullness of light for me, upon all the pathway of my testing. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil."

Brethren, what is the guarantee that this prayer, in all its

petitions, may be answered? The One who taught it. Bread—do I need the sustenance of my spiritual life? He says, "I am the bread of life." Physical bread—do I need it? Surely I do. What said He? "Seek God's Kingdom, and these things shall be added to thee." I have Himself to feed me spiritually; I have His covenant to feed me physically. And, when I come to forgiveness, how may I ask forgiveness? Only and ever in His merit, and upon the condition that I forgive. How shall I forgive? The spirit of Jesus is the spirit of forgiveness; and, as I have the mind of Christ, I shall be able to forgive.

Lastly, how about this world of temptation? "He was tempted in all points like as we are, sin apart"—which means as to origin, as well as to process. "Tempted in all points like as we are, sin apart; therefore able to succour such as are tempted." I bring all the petitions to my Father, the King and the Shepherd, in the name and merit of my Lord; and I know this—that my life is sustained, that I am made victorious over sin and victorious over temptation, in and through Him who taught me to pray this prayer.

IV

THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

Our subject now is that of the practice of prayer. Of course, the things already considered form the necessary background of this study. We remember the divine provision in Jesus, which creates the possibility of prayer for us—the revelation of the Father, the mediation of the Son, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We remember, moreover, the human preparation that is necessary to the exercise of our high and holy privilege; that preparation, namely, of response in our lives to the great claims of the truths which we have considered as making prayer possible for us.

Now, in speaking of the practice of prayer, let me say, first, that we are bound to do so by a process of elimination; that is to say, there are so many things to be left out, and it may be well first to indicate our recognition of that fact. Throughout the teaching of our blessed Lord, there are so many things He said about prayer. It is really very wonderful, when one reads the Gospels from that standpoint, how much of the apparently little that has been recorded for us of our Lord's sayings, has to do with prayer. There are many directions; the conditions are explicitly stated, and the possibility is declared, over and over again, with startling clearness. But we cannot pretend to survey the whole field of our Lord's teaching as to the practice of prayer; therefore we shall select three of the words of Jesus, and one of the things that Jesus said after He had ascended, by the Holy Spirit, through His servant Paul. Four passages of Scripture, then, I shall direct your attention to, in a moment. Then you will remember, please, as we look at these passages, that again this process of elimination must be applied: we are not going to attempt anything like an exhaustive examination of them.

I want to turn to these four passages to attempt, as the Spirit shall direct us, to see their simplest statement and application. The first is in Matthew 6: 6, just before the pattern prayer. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and, having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee." That is

the great word of Jesus which directs us to the practice of prayer in privacy—to the lonely, individual, and personal exercise of our high and holy privilege. Now, if you will turn on to Matthew 18: 19 and 20, "Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." That is the great promise of Jesus; and, moreover, His revelation of condition for prayer-meetings, for collective praying, for that sympathy and symphony in prayer which must never be neglected.

Then I shall turn you to John 15: 7, and, without desiring to make any improper differentiation between His sayings, yet I feel this is a passage in which He states the whole fact, as to the possibility of prayer, with most wonderful spaciousness. I am perfectly sure that, if we really understand this passage, we shall be astonished at what our Lord says: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Then, finally, for reading only as to one or two words, to the Second Letter to the Corinthians 13: 14, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all."

Now you notice that the first of those verses, Matthew 6: 6, begins with, "But," showing a background and a contrast which flings the charge up into greater relief. He says, "When ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites." What was the sign of the hypocrites? They "stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men." It is not wrong to stand and pray in the synagogue; it is not wrong to stand and pray at the corner of the street. It *is* wrong to stand and pray *anywhere*, that men may see us do it. Mark, I pray you, the fine and yet tender and yet searching sarcasm of Jesus. He says, "Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward." They obtain what they want—they are seen of men; and that is an end of the whole business. That is the background—the background is the prayer that obtrudes itself upon the attention of men, from which may God deliver us all!

Now what is the foreground of the charge here? "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and, having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." The one thought that I bring you, out of this passage, is our Lord's remarkable insistence upon the necessity for separation and seclusion and secrecy for the exercise of prayer. He cannot be more emphatic, as it seems to me, in the very simplicity of the words. If you come to a little child and tell him to do what that

verse says, what will he do? He will find some room, which is an inner room in some sense, and, when he enters, what will he do? Shut the door. You say, "That is very patent." Yes, but is it patent? Have we treated it as if it were patent? An inner chamber, and a shut door—now, brethren, you may translate that into any language provided that you never interfere with the underlying teaching that there must be, in the life of the man or woman of prayer, a place for retirement, a time for seclusion, an exercise of this high and holy privilege in absolute loneliness, when husband or wife, father or mother, brother or sister, child, all these are excluded. This is the first practice of prayer which is of importance.

Now, turn from these great words of Jesus, and think of them in the midst of our own busy life; of what they mean to us there. They mean—well, for every one of us; but now my words are specially to the young—to have a Bethel, to have a *place of prayer*. It may not be a place that we can retain exclusively for prayer. It may not be, in our dwelling, some chapel; but it must be a place which, for the time being, is exclusively for prayer. Even at the risk of being charged with material thinking about this, I strongly advise every young person to have some place in the home —it may be your own bedroom, if there is nowhere else—to which you habitually resort to meet God all alone. I am perfectly sure that, for every minister of the Gospel, it ought to be his study; I feel that strongly. But, my younger brethren, in order to have a separate Bethel, although you may pray in your own study, you must make it a place where, with even the Bible set on one side, you may look into the face of God alone, so that, by secret retirement with Him, the light and glory of His presence may flash upon all your reading and work. Wherever it is, let it be a place for prayer. Listen: an "inner chamber," that is what Jesus said; and a shut door. That is the outward sign and symbol for the practice of prayer in absolute loneliness.

I most earnestly urge upon you, brethren, as a practical application of the study of these days, to take hold of the great opening and opportunity for prayer which is yours in the Christian fact and life, and begin its practice by finding one place for it. You know, there is a great deal in having this one place. I do not know how my brethren feel about preaching, but I much object to preaching in new places. People will hardly believe that, but it is true. There is, in one's own place, a familiarity with the surroundings which makes you forget them. So also with prayer in that little quiet place. Ah me, if we could only see the world, as they of the upper spaces see it! If only we could see London as the angels see it, when God sends them forth on their missions,

we should not be interested in the Abbey and the Tower—*we* should not, I hope. We should want to find those secret places where the saints hold converse with God, such as some loft in a stable. There is a lad, in connection with my church, who drives a van. He came to me the other day; and when we were talking about this, it was good to hear him say, "I go every morning to the loft where they keep the hay; that is my sanctuary." That is what I mean; get a place, some familiar place, for being alone with God.

Not only a place, but have a *time* for being alone with God. What time, it is not for me to say. I would not have anybody to be bound by rules concerning time or anything else; but have a time—times if you will, but a time at least. We shall all agree that, for the young, strong, and healthy, there is no time like the morning. I must not stay upon this point; but if I hurry it, you will not think it to be unimportant. Have some hour out of the twenty-four; perhaps not the whole hour. Remember that God can do a wonderful amount of work in five minutes, if you can spare no more; but He can do nothing in five minutes if you ought to give Him sixty. All that is for you yourself to decide with Him. Have a time, the time in which the door is shut, the best beloved on earth excluded, the soul brought face to face with God, His programme enquired about, my need met, as I take my way through "the little while," waiting for the dawning of His great morning. Have a place, a time, an inner chamber, a time set apart, and a method.

Here I speak with great carefulness and reserve, yet I am bound to say what is laid on my heart. Find the method of prayer which helps you most, whether it be that of speaking aloud in your loneliness, or allowing your heart to be still so that you hardly speak at all. Standing, kneeling, sitting—find the method that helps you most; no one method is insisted upon in the Scripture of truth; only cultivate this habit of lonely prayer. Habit, did I say? Yes, dear young brother or sister, do not forget that the habit of the Christian life must be formed, just as much as the habit of evil is formed; and the thing which at first, perhaps, is trying and a little difficult, presently becomes second nature—although I would much prefer to say first nature—until you find, presently, that you can no more live without that place and time and method of personal dealing with God in every day, than you could live without that breathing which is the sustenance of your physical life. But, I pray you, in all these matters, distinguish between the essentials and the accidentals; that where the place is, what the hour may be, what the method may be—all these are accidentals; the essential thing is time, alone, in absolute seclusion, for prayer.

Then, turn to Matthew 18: 19, 20—and this passage is one of a very large number, as I am sure you know, which is very often spoiled by misquotation. You will hear this passage quoted thus: "Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask," then come in the three words *concerning my kingdom.* I have heard that, North, South, East, and West, quoted in that way; but it does not say so. Put no limitation upon the charter of prayer which the Lord Himself has not put there. You may say: "Everything must be concerning His Kingdom." I grant you that, but do not put it here; there is a false sense to the meaning of the passage, if you do. Here it rather stands, "What things soever."

This is the word I wanted, not the one I gave by mistake—"as touching *anything* that they shall ask, it shall be done." It is not correct to imagine that it does not mean concerning the Kingdom—because, to you and to me, there is no other matter of interest; but, when we think of the Kingdom, we think of a specific work. In this promise of Jesus, all matters are taken into account; and "whatsoever ye shall ask," "anything" that they shall ask—*anything* that is the word we are to keep in mind. Now notice, brethren, "two"—and that is qualified in the word that comes after, which is always taken in close connection with this, "For"—notice the beginning of v. 20—"where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Now, whatever other use we may make of v. 20, it is surely important always to remember the use that *Jesus* made of it. We all believe that this great word reveals for us the deepest truth concerning the Church of Christ, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." When Jesus uttered those words, it was in connection with the promise of an answer to collective praying. It is the method in which He indicates the condition upon which the promise He makes is to be fulfilled: "If two of you shall agree as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done." If you say that alone, and leave it there, I fear you are imagining something which Jesus did not mean. He goes on immediately to say: "For"—that is so, *because*; as though the Lord had said, "The reason I am able to say that is because . . ." and what is it? "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Two souls gathered together in the name of Jesus, He in the midst. Now, whatever they ask for, under the dominance of that Presence, God will give. It is because He is in the midst that the prayer becomes what it ought to be. But, notice first of all, the place of meeting—"Where." How we love that word—no longer

in Jerusalem, at the Temple; no longer in this mountain, set apart; no longer in the church or the meeting-house, or any other place only. "Where"—and so now we have included every place where two of the saints meet together; in the home, in the fields, upon the sea, on the mountains, in the great cathedral, in the mission-hall; all these things are accidentals, and matter very little; it is the "where." Yes, *but* what is the peculiar character of the "where"? Two or three "gathered together in my name," *gathered* in my name.

I do not want to over-emphasise this; but my own strong belief is that it is not two or three *met* together in my name, not two or three *assembled* together in my name; but it has behind it the great thought of Jesus as Gatherer, as Administrator by the Spirit. "Where two or three are gathered together"—and remember that if I insert these words I do not leave them there, but it is only by way of suggestion—"by the Spirit gathered together in my name." That means not merely two or three people who call themselves Christians, but two or three people who are gathered together in the very nature of Jesus—sharers of His life, those in whom He is light, life, and love, gathered in His name. Well, now, to these people He says: "If two of you shall agree."

Now, brethren, there is the great charter for the prayer-meeting. Jesus comes down to the lowest number that can make a meeting. You cannot have a meeting of one. You can have prayer when you are alone—that we have dealt with; but "where two" —that is the smallest meeting possible—"or three." Jesus said "three," in order to show that it is not merely the meeting together of the saints—units, tens, hundreds; it does not at all matter, provided that the centre of the gathering is Christ Himself, that the power is that of His name, that He is the *Lord* Jesus Christ. Then what? Then ask anything, and it shall be done.

Now, once again, to make a very simple application of this, leaving all those vaster regions and more spacious meanings—here is the warrant for the meeting together of the saints in prayer. And, brethren, is there anything we need more in this day than the restoration of the prayer-meeting? I wonder how many prayer-meetings there are being held! I wonder whether you will be patient with me, if I make a simple and obvious remark. What is a prayer-meeting? A meeting for prayer. Oh, we want to get hold of it! We meet together for prayer, often, and imagine that the thing is dull if there is not singing, and that it is incomplete unless somebody gives an exposition of Scripture. I maintain that if prayer-meetings are to be truly such, the whole time should be devoted to prayer. "Would you not sing at all?" Personally, I should not do so, unless it were

some of the great prayer hymns. Thank God, we are rich in them. "But would you not read the Word of God?" No, save some passage that indicates our responsibility concerning prayer, or one that re-states the great charter of prayer. "What would you do?" Let us gather together for prayer.

"But," said someone to me, when I answered something like this on the other side of the water, "That kind of prayer-meeting would not be popular." Oh, has it come to this, that any Christian man should imagine popularity to be the test for anything in connection with the work of the Church of God? Yet, remember, if I may speak that word in some other sense, I believe you will find that to be the popular prayer-meeting when once its real meaning is learned. First, the whole time given to prayer—then what? No waiting? Now, do not misunderstand that. You say, "That is the trouble; everybody waits in our prayer-meeting." How do you know that? Nothing has killed the prayer-meeting more than the fussy feverishness to hear somebody pray. I say that, perhaps, rather severely, but out of deep conviction. The whole company gathered together—two or three, two or three hundred, two or three thousand—when we go to prayer, let us all be in prayer, not waiting to hear somebody pray. That is the first law of the prayer-meeting—that cessation in *uttered* prayer, is not cessation of prayer. Then, in the next place, what? That there shall be no waiting, in another sense; that when the Spirit prompts to lead in audible prayer, there shall be immediate response. Elder waits for younger, younger waits for elder; the Spirit waits for all, and is grieved and hindered. There should be consciousness that we are in the presence of the living Head, and the agreement about something upon which to offer prayer —a very important principle. I think that in the prayer-meetings, which are the very power-centres of our Christian service, there may be, first, the moment spent in agreeing as to what we are to ask for. When there is perfect agreement as to the petitions to be presented, and then the consciousness of the Master's presence, there need be no further waiting, but silent prayer may be made until some heart breaks out into audible prayer—never one waiting for another, but always, only, absolutely waiting for the guidance of the Spirit of God.

Oh, my brothers and sisters, *these* prayer-meetings ought to be the prayer-meetings in our church work; but while we imagine that the only place for the prayer-meeting is the church, we need to turn to the social side of the need for our Christian women in this business of praying. Why not, some part of next season, instead of having the empty and unmeaning "At Homes," have "At Homes for prayer"? Why not? Why not issue invitations

upon this basis. We are praying throughout the length and breadth of the world, with more or less of intelligence, for a revival. I think that while we have been crying "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the days of old, the generations of ancient times," He has been crying to us, "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments." I think God has been saying to the Church, if we can but hear, "Why cry to me? I have never slumbered nor slept." There must be prayer; but we need to be very careful in praying, that we do not put the blame of failure back upon God. We need to see that we ourselves are upon right lines.

What are we going to say when we can get the saints gathered together in little groups, in the home, in the fields, anywhere? I go back, as I speak, a good number of years in memory—I go back at least eight and twenty years ago, when I was beginning to witness for the Lord. It is a memory of one young fellow, a colporteur, with whom I used to go over the Cotswold Hills. I was a boy at school, and I used to go with him to village stations for preaching. It was a habit of his to suggest to me that we should always start half-an-hour earlier and pause somewhere on the way, by gate or stile, to pray together. I have no more hallowed memory in my heart today than of the little meetings, when I was a boy with dear David Smith, who is now in God's own light, as we met, the two of us, is those country places and prayed. Oh, if we would give up some of the other things! But the Master will make His own application. The meeting for prayer the two, the three, in His name—Oh, listen, listen—with the subduing, overawing sense that there is Another there that these eyes of sense cannot see, but that the Spirit-quickened can know! A remittal to Him of all as we gather, then His whisper in our midst as to the thing we should pray for; we ask, and He says God will give it to us.

One moment upon that verse 7 in John 15. You see that this is but a touch upon the outlying fringe of the great subject, so far. But take that verse, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Personally, I do not know any passage in the New Testament which seems to me more to defy translation than that. Every word in the great promise is full of suggestiveness; and it does seem as though any translation misses all the light and glory. The first part is so simple that a child may take the words and know them. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you." That is a reflex thought. When do I abide in Him? When His words abide in me. When do His words abide in me? When, by obedience, I abide in Him. And, dear young Christian, the one thing that you

do not need, in order to abide in Christ, is strength; the only condition for abiding anywhere, is weakness. Every mother knows that to be true. It is when the child is just beginning to be strong enough to walk that you don't know where to find it! That is not to contradict the important thought that we become mature. I would not undervalue the message delivered to us the other night, on the monstrosity of remaining babes in Christ, in some senses. But there is no struggling in abiding. No branch struggles to keep in the vine; it stays there. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you . . ."—all that is simple, with the greatest simplicity.

But, now listen—"ask whatsoever ye will." I venture to say that the peculiar word Jesus used here for *asking* may, without any violence, be interpreted thus: "Ye shall demand as your due." It is the strongest word that can possibly be used. "Whatsoever ye will" you may, without any violence, translate thus, "Whatsoever you are inclined to, desire, or wish." And, listen—"it shall be done unto you"; you will do no violence if you translate as "it shall be generated for you." This is the vastest thing about prayer, it seems to me, that our Lord ever said; the crowning declaration. You shall demand, as your due, whatever you are inclined to, and it shall be done or generated for you! "It is an appalling thing," you say. Ah, but listen for the condition—a simple one, but a flaming sword! "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you." See the inter-relation; this thing applies to personal and collective prayer. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you." What then? You are only inclined to the things that He is inclined to. I shall desire the thing that He desires; I shall wish for the things for which He wishes; and therefore I shall ask for the things for which He would ask. And the things He desires, must come. God is pledged to Him in holy covenant; and in prayer, by my abiding in Him and His word abiding in me, I enter into such relationship with Him, that God's covenant with Him becomes God's covenant with me; and things so asked, He says, "shall be done unto you."

Oh, again, that is but the outlying fringe of the great word! Let us ponder carefully, and remember that this whole possibility of prayer is, in itself, a fire that will either blight and harm us, or else be that which brings us into fellowship with God in all the marvellous wonder of His mighty working. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you."

Finally, and in a word, hear, I pray you, that benediction in 2 Corinthians 13: 14. And why refer to it? Because it covers everything all along the line of our study, by its suggestiveness. I have said that prayer is created by the revelation of the Father,

and the mediation of the Son, and the inspiration of the Spirit. Let this Benediction—I have taken it because it is so familiar—be your remembrancer. Here you do not find, first, revelation; because it is through the mystery of the work of Jesus you found that, and you found the Christ, first. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the mediating One; and the love of God our Father—you only find that by the revelation of Himself in Christ; and the communion of the Holy Spirit, by which this inspiration is maintained: these things be with you all. So, whenever we have that Benediction, let it remind us of the foundation facts, but also, brethren, of our response. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ"—now hear this, "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." "And the love of God our Father"—"Keep yourselves in the love of God." "And the communion of the Holy Spirit"—"Grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Thus privilege and response are both brought face to face with us, in that great Benediction. Our privilege—the grace of the mediating Son, the love of the revealed Father, the communion of the indwelling Spirit; our responsibility, now again at the close—grieve not the Spirit, and so abide in the love of the Father, and thus grow in the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And so, brethren, my last word to you is this—prayer and life are inter-dependent. The measure in which prayer becomes to me a prevailing power, is the measure in which my life is what it ought to be; and the measure in which my life is what it ought to be, is the measure in which I am wholly and truly abandoned to the Lord Jesus Christ—first, for my own cleansing and filling; but, finally and principally, that I may be a fellow-worker with Him in the great movement toward the accomplishment of His purpose. Prayer and life are thus interwoven, until, as we learn the lesson, we shall obey the Lord's great word that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint." And the fainting will cease, because the praying will continue, and will be the power by which we live and serve.

V

THE BIBLE AND THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

by

Prof. W. H. Griffith Thomas, M.A., D.D.

1914

DR. W. H. GRIFFITH THOMAS

Few eminent scholars have had to overcome greater initial handicaps than did W. H. Griffith Thomas. His father died before he was born, on January 2, 1861; and although his mother married again, financial stringency necessitated his leaving school at the age of 14. A member of the church choir, he was asked at 16 to take a Sunday-school class, and in trying to teach others learned his own lack. He could see the difference between himself and some others of the young folk at the church, and was ready for a talk with two of them, which led to his receiving Christ as his Saviour. Immediately he became a zealous student of the Scriptures and an ardent witness for his Lord.

When 18 he went from his native Shropshire to London, to work in an uncle's office—and despite the relationship, he had to work so hard that he was not free to begin studying until 10.30 p.m. Such was his resolution to equip himself as well as possible for Christian service, however, that he set himself to learn Greek, often poring over his books until 2.30 a.m. Then at 21 came a great opportunity: the vicar of the church he attended in London offered him a lay-curacy, which would afford him more time for study. He was thus able to attend morning lectures at King's College; and after three years he secured his A.K.C. with distinction, and was ordained.

Three years later he moved to St. Aldate's, Oxford, as curate, in order to study for a degree at the University. There were many difficulties to overcome, but at length he was admitted as a non-collegiate student at Christ Church. He did so well that in 1894 he was awarded the Hall-Houghton Junior Septuagint Prize, and in 1895 graduated B.D. with First Class Honours—only one other candidate gaining that distinction.

He was now 34; but great opportunity came swiftly. The following year he was appointed vicar of St. Paul's, Portman Square, which was then a most influential centre of Evangelical life and testimony, in the West End of London. During his nine years' incumbency, Griffith Thomas enhanced its reputation for virile and authoritative preaching and teaching, and established his own renown as a foremost Bible expositor.

In 1905 he returned to Oxford, as Principal of Wycliffe Hall, an Anglican training college for ordinands. His five years there are generally regarded as the most important of his life: for he exercised a profound influence upon all his students, who affectionately knew him as "G.T." In those days, when the icy blasts of Higher Criticism were blowing from Germany, and shaking the faith of many, he stood as a

rock for the authority of the Scriptures, and the finality of the revelation contained therein.

A surprise invitation came from Canada, in 1910, to a Professorial Chair at Wycliffe College, Toronto; and although this was a step down, academically, he regarded it as a call from the Lord, and unhesitatingly obeyed. The last fourteen years of his life were therefore spent mostly on the other side of the Atlantic, in extensive Bible teaching ministry, with frequent visits "home," especially to speak at Keswick. He was a highly-esteemed figure there, and gave the Bible Readings in 1922. The series reproduced here, however, were midday addresses given in 1914: they contain many an echo of the controversies aroused by Biblical criticism in those disturbed days, and reveal his strength as a stalwart of the truth. It was to the faithful stand of men like him, that we today owe more than is generally realised. These addresses are not chosen for their apologetic content, however, but for their stimulating, spiritual unfolding of the Word of God.

I

THE BIBLE AS A REVELATION

SEVERAL years ago an enterprising Pressman wrote to a hundred men representing various positions and classes in England—peers of the realm, members of the House of Commons, professional men, merchants, and others—with this letter to the whole hundred: "Suppose you were condemned to three years' solitary imprisonment, and only could take with you three books, which three would you select? Please state them in the order of your preference." If I remember aright, ninety-eight out of the hundred put the Bible first of the three. This is all the more remarkable because quite a number of those men were not only not Christians, or even churchgoers, but some of them had actually worked against the Christian religion. Nevertheless, as they thought of the possibility of three years' solitary confinement, the Bible, in that large number of instances, was put first of the three books that they would desire to have with them. It is a fine testimony to that Book which enters into everything in Christianity. The Bible touches the Christian life at all points; and for this reason it is surely essential for us to be clear as to what the Bible really is, and in what respects it affects our thought and action.

During these four mornings it has fallen to my lot to speak on four aspects of the Bible, and the idea and intention is to say something of the Bible in relation to that spiritual life which brings us together at Keswick, because the Bible enters into the spiritual life just as much as it enters into every other department and aspect of the Christian religion.

"The Bible and the Spiritual Life." Our present subject is "The Bible as a Revelation"; next, "The Bible as an Authority"; then thirdly, "The Bible as a Message"; and finally, "The Bible as a Power."

This is a day of communication, from the crudest form up to wireless telegraphy and aeroplanes; but the question beyond all others is whether it is possible to have communication with and from God.

No one can read the Old Testament or the New Testament

without seeing indications that the writers at any rate believed that they could and did receive communications from God. In Genesis 15: 1 you have the first statement which is found frequently afterwards, "The word of the Lord came." In the prophets you find again and again what is found in Ezekiel 6: 1, "The word of the Lord came unto me." In the Book of Leviticus, something like thirty times we read, "The Lord spake unto Moses." In the New Testament, John the Baptist, the last and greatest of the prophets, has the same prophetic experience, "The word of God came unto John" (Luke 3: 2). When you turn to the Epistles you find in 1 Corinthians 14: 37, "Let (a man) acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the comments of the Lord." In 1 Thessalonians 4: 15 we read, "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord."

A modern writer has well said that the prophets were absolutely convinced of receiving communications from God. Indeed, there are two tests given to us in the Old Testament in regard to this very matter. There were two ways in which every Israelite was to examine and test the credentials of a man who claimed to be a prophet of the Lord. At your leisure you can study these things for yourselves. They were to know by the fulfilment (Deut. 18: 21–22). With this you can look at Jeremiah 28: 9. If the thing came to pass, it was regarded as credible. But then there was another complementary test. They were to know by the genuineness of a thing whether it came from the Lord (Deut. 13: 1–5). It might come to pass and yet not be genuine; just as there are spiritualistic media today—genuine communications, I doubt not, but not therefore necessarily from God.

I remember, some years ago, asking Dr. Zwemer here at Keswick, how he accounted for the spread of Islam, and he said that people make a great mistake in thinking that Islam is a natural religion. He said, "It is a supernatural religion, but supernatural from below." So the two tests in the Old Testament were these: "Is it accurate?" "Is it true?" God is spoken of as "The God of Truth." The Holy Spirit has as one of His titles, "The Spirit of Truth." We are told also that everyone that is of the truth heareth Christ's voice.

I want to take you, if I may, step by step in regard to this question of divine revelation. First, I think I shall carry you all with me when I say that *revelation is possible.* If we believe that God exists, and that He is Almighty, then, of course, He can communicate Himself to us. No one can deny the possibility of revelation unless he is prepared to deny the existence of God. Of course, the Bible pre-supposes, takes for granted, the existence

of God. It never attempts to prove it. "In the beginning God." We must do the same. So my first point is that revelation is possible because God is, and is Almighty.

Secondly, *revelation is probable.* Shall we agree with that? It is probable for this reason, that self-communication is natural to us. We cannot help communicating ourselves to others. Interest and love prompt the communication of self. God is love, and that very fact implies that He will—I was going to say He must—communicate Himself; because it is of the essence of love to reveal itself. Love would not be love unless it did communicate itself to others; and therefore the fact that God is love suggests the probability of revelation.

Thirdly, *revelation is necessary.* I wonder whether we shall all agree here. There are two things necessary for life—knowledge and power; what Matthew Arnold once called "light and leading." No one can surely say that these things are unnecessary, because of that which we call "sin." Sin has brought uncertainty, calling for knowledge; sin has brought weakness, calling for power. Therefore I do not propose to spend any more time discussing this, that revelation is necessary. In Dr. James Orr's book, *Revelation and Inspiration,* he says, "There is probably no proposition on which the higher religious philosophy of the past century is more agreed than this, that all religion originates in revelation."

The only question is, What is this revelation, and how does it come to us? That brings me to the fourth point, and I want to say this quite frankly—*revelation is available.* You see how far we have travelled—possible, probable, necessary, and now available. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son" (Heb. 1: 1, 2). We believe that revelation is available in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now a person communicates himself either by acts or by words, or by both. For the first disciples, before our Lord's resurrection, His presence was revelation; His presence was sufficient. But we today have His words, as we have not His presence in the sense that they had. So you find in John 20: 30–31, "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name." So for us today the words of the Lord Jesus take the place of His personal presence, and are the media of His revelation. St. Paul has the same idea in that well-known passage 2 Timothy 3: 16–17. Thus our position as

Christians is this, that God has revealed Himself in nature; God has revealed Himself in providence and history; but pre-eminently God has revealed Himself in Christ for spiritual realities.

Natural religion has never been found sufficient for man's life, because of sin. Man's nature has never been an adequate mirror of divine revelation. If you want to know the highest and best, as well as the deepest and worst, of which human nature is capable, read Romans 1, where you will find what Sir William Ramsay calls "St. Paul's philosophy of history." When you look at that and see what men had, and yet did not retain God in their life, you see the futility and the fatality of a merely natural revelation. So again we say that revelation is available in Christ; and of this revelation in Christ we believe the New Testament is the purest, fullest and clearest expression.

It is interesting to notice that all the great religions have their sacred books. It would seem as though *Litera scripta manet*—"The written word abides"—is the foundation principle and necessity of all divine communication. We shall look, perhaps, a little more closely at that later; meanwhile, we will take it that the New Testament for us is the clearest and fullest and purest and most reliable embodiment of the divine revelation in Christ.

That brings me to my next point: *revelation is assured.* It is possible, probable, necessary, available, assured. And that brings us to the heart of our subject in this Bible Reading: Why do we believe the New Testament to be a divine revelation? You notice I do not refer to the Old Testament in detail, because if you can prove the New Testament I think you carry the Old Testament with it. At any rate, we are on the ground that is most convenient for our purpose if we concentrate on the New Testament, and look upon that as the embodiment of a divine revelation. Now, there are just three steps: will you take them?

The New Testament is genuine—i.e., it is the work of those for whom it is claimed—the associates of Jesus Christ. The genuineness of the New Testament can be claimed in a variety of ways, and if this were merely a Christian evidence talk we should have to elaborate; but I want to show, if I can, as briefly as possible, for the sake of those who in their parishes, and perhaps in their homes and colleges, are concerned with these subjects, some outline of the general reasons why we believe that the New Testament is genuine.

First of all, there is the testimony of the Church through the centuries. Do not be afraid of a book called Paley's *Evidences of Christianity*. Cambridge men know all about that! Although the

second and third parts of Paley can be ignored, the first part is practically as valuable today as ever it was; and if you will take Paley's eleven points, written in that wonderfully clear, pellucid English of which he was a master, you will see what I mean by the testimony of the Church through the centuries to the genuineness of these books.

Then there is the indirect testimony of the books themselves. You examine the books, and you see in them an indirect testimony to their genuineness—that they did come from that time. If you gave me a New Testament as an entirely new book, of which I knew nothing, though I might know a little of the history of the last fifty years, and if I read in the New Testament and came across the word "boycott," I should say, "Hold! This is not the first century. That very word 'boycott' stamps it as mid-Victorian, because we can trace the time when it came into our language." Of course, if I read about aeroplanes, I should know at once that that book which you told me was first century is twentieth. This is the water-mark, like the water-mark of a bank note. You hold up a banknote, and you see the point which is the unfailing test of its genuineness.

Soon after I went to Canada, four years ago, a bank manager showed me a dollar bill, and he said, "Have you ever noticed this? This is one of the marks of the genuineness of an American dollar bill"; and he pointed out to me on the back of it some hairs in the paper. He said, "That is a secret; no one knows how that has been put in. It is an infallible mark of a genuine dollar bill." Now, whenever I have a dollar bill, I look for those hairs.

The New Testament has the same marks. You can test it for its genuineness, and men like Sir William Ramsay have done it. You remember that a few years ago he went out to Asia convinced that the Acts of the Apostles was not genuine; he has come back more and more convinced that it does date from the first century, and is the work of Luke, the companion of Paul.

Then there is *the testimony of adversaries.* If opponents from Celsus to Rousseau and down to the present day do not think anything of this Book, why do they trouble about it? Why do they not leave it alone? Because the Bible does not leave them alone; that is why!

And what is more, in the minds of a great many, *the very best scholarship of our time is bringing the New Testament back and back to the first century.* I only know of one exception to that rule, and I do not know that that can be regarded as absolutely settled. Indeed, I am sure it is not, because Professor Hort said that if he once expressed a doubt about a thing he began to question whether

he was correct, and wanted to go back to the other side at once. If a great scholar such as he could express that attitude, we may certainly be content to take the Book as it stands. Harnack and quite a number of other English and German scholars are pushing back the New Testament books to that place and time in which they have always been held by the Church of Christ to be genuine works of the associates of Christ.

Secondly, the New Testament is credible, i.e., it is worthy of belief. There are many things which are genuine which are not credible. There are many books of fiction that are perfectly genuine, but not credible. You read a book like *The Shepherd of Hermas*, the John Bunyan of the second century. It is perfectly genuine, but it is not credible. So this credibility is the next point. The New Testament is not only genuine, but it is worthy of our belief.

Why? First of all, because of the *unblemished character of the witnesses*. Test and sift and examine all the witnesses, and you will find their character stands all the tests that you can apply.

Next, *because of the agreement of the facts of the New Testament with the facts of Christianity in the world.* Here is Christianity in the world, with its ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper and the Lord's Day, all independent of the New Testament, in existence at least thirty years before a line of the New Testament was written. Yet when the New Testament and they are compared, there is an entire agreement between the facts of Christianity in the world and the facts recorded in this Book.

Then *the contents of the New Testament do nothing but good.* That is another proof of credibility. During the American Civil War, General Grant came into prominence by notable victories after the other generals had failed. Some of these generals were jealous of Grant's growing fame and consequent promotion, and they went to Abraham Lincoln and charged Grant with drinking. "Well," said Lincoln, "find out the name of the brand he is drinking, and we will give it to all our other generals!" All I have to say is this: the critics of the Bible who are jealous of their impotence and of the victories won by the Bible, and accuse it of mendacity, had better drink from those springs, and they will find in the deep draughts of its truth that which will assure them of its credibility.

Then I want to say that *the explorations in Egypt, Palestine, Babylon and Rome all go to confirm the Bible, Old and New Testament.* During the last sixty years there have been many archaeological researches, and I want you to notice that there has not been one of those researches that has gone to contradict the Bible or to prove it untrue. That is true of the New Testament in the hands

of men like Bishop Hicks and Sir William Ramsay, to mention only two out of others.

If you have followed me so far, as to the genuineness and the credibility, I think you will be prepared to take the third step—I know it is a jump, but I believe it is an inevitable jump: *The New Testament is divine, supernatural*—call it what you will. Here I get to the very heart of my subject, and if you are to be home for your lunch I shall have to hurry! I have to talk of the Bible and the essentials of its supernaturalness. I have given you three points; I am going to give you seven more.

First of all, *supernatural creation.* There is that in the Bible which is supernatural in connection with creation. Do you know, either in the old world or the new you never get behind Genesis 1: 2. There is not a single account of creation in the old world that gets further back than chaos; it starts with chaos. But the Bible starts with God; there is the supernaturalness of it. There is not a single bit of grace in the old world of creation by God—only chaos. But, then, who created chaos?

The same thing is true of modern science. Do you know that modern science can only get as far back as what is called "Nebular Hypothesis"? But that has to assume two things—the existence of nebulae and the power to rotate. Who, then, created nebulae, and who gave the nebulae power to rotate? But when the Bible says, "In the beginning God," it goes further back. Therefore, we say the Bible is from God because of its supernatural creation.

Secondly, *supernatural revelation.* There is a revelation of a religion in the Old Testament, whether the revelation of the religion of the Jewish system, or the revelation of the religion of the prophets. I do not mind whether you have one or the other, or both; but no one can doubt that in the Old Testament there is a supernatural revelation. A speaker is said to have uttered words, and those words were declared to others, and were put down; and whether you think of the prophets in the latter part or the earlier part, there is this supernatural revelation.

Thirdly, *a supernatural nation,* the Jews. The story is pretty generally used now, but it is worth using, of Frederick the Great asking his chaplain for the evidence of Christianity in a word, and he said, "Sir, the Jew." Here is a nation unique in the annals of mankind; a little country, not larger than Wales, in which a nation is found absolutely unique. A modern writer in Germany says that he could not understand why Chemosh, the god of the Moabites, never developed into the universal God of the Jews. No, I have no doubt he cannot understand that, because he looks at it from the naturalistic point of view; but if we believe that the God of the Jews was Jehovah, the Lord of heaven and earth,

we can understand why this supernatural nation is supernatural.

Fourthly, *supernatural expectation.* There is that in the Old Testament which is always pointing forward to the future, especially the coming of the Messiah. Some of you will remember that in Canon Liddon's Bampton Lectures he says that there are 333 references to the Messiah in the Old Testament, and some of you will remember that Dr. Pierson said that, based on mathematical grounds, the chances of all those 333 references concentrating on one individual were simply marvellous. I do not know sufficient mathematics to tell you the figure, but I remember reading it years ago. If you take one and then you take a second, you reduce the possibility every time, and when you get to 333 the result is astounding. Yet all the references concentrate on one Man, the Man from the nation of the Jews, from the tribe of Judah, from the family of David, or Jesse, in the place mentioned in Micah, Bethlehem, and so on. You see at once this marvellous expectation. Well, here again we are altogether independent of any particular view of the Old Testament, except the fact that there is in that Old Testament a spirit of expectation; and I do not believe that there is any scholar worthy of the name who will deny that in the Old Testament there is that expectation, always looking forward to someone who is to come.

Fifthly, *supernatural Incarnation.* Here we come face to face with the New Testament and the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, of course, this subject itself is more than sufficient for a whole series of addresses, but I only ask you to notice the portrait of Jesus Christ, the combination and balance of qualities in Christ and the perfection of His character. I wonder whether everyone knows that not a single great master in literature has ever tried to depict a perfect character. Starting from Homer, right down to the present day, you cannot find a single literary genius who has ever attempted to depict a perfect man or woman. Who is the most perfect character in Shakespeare? Well, most people think Hamlet; but he was not very perfect, was he? The same thing is true of all the great writers in poetry and prose. Yet here is a picture drawn by four ordinary men, two of them most ordinary, depicting a perfect character which has been the admiration of the ages. How do you account for that? I entirely agree that if these men invented Jesus you are in the presence of a most wonderful miracle, and more wonderful than any miracle that you would now find in the Gospel. Rousseau well says, "It takes a Jesus to invent a Jesus." To think that those ordinary men should have put into human form a perfect character is, I believe, to introduce you to the supernatural. That is all I can

say about it, but you will notice that it is capable of the most wonderful elaboration.

Sixthly, *supernatural manifestation*—and by that I mean the existence of the Christian Church. We fail to realise how supernatural the Church is. By the Church, of course, I mean what we always mean at Keswick, and what the New Testament always means, "the blessed company of all faithful people." That is the Church of England phrase; that is what the Church of England stands for; that is the meaning of the Church, the congregation of the faithful, those that belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. That Church was supernatural in its beginning, supernatural in its course, and is supernatural in its persistence to this present day. No compulsion led to this Church; every worldly advantage was against it, and yet it commenced, it has continued, and it lasts to the present day. It is no wonder that Tertullian said, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." It is no wonder that all the opposition to the Christian Church has never touched it in the least; it is here today as strong as ever.

There was a man from Ireland who built a wall three feet high and four feet thick. When he was asked why he had done it he said, "Shure, if the wall turns over it will be higher than iver!" So it is with the Church; you can persecute it, you can devastate it, but you cannot destroy it. This supernatural manifestation is one of the greatest evidences of Christianity. Without compulsion, with everything against it, simply those who are united to the Lord Jesus Christ and belong to Him—that is the Christian Church, the society of saved sinners.

Now number seven, *supernatural attestation.* That is my seventh point, but I have not finished, because I have under that head (a), (b) and (c). The friends who are accustomed to hear my lectures in Toronto know what a tendency I have for division and sub-division and sub-sub-division!

(a) *The attestation of the apostle Paul* is one of the greatest evidences of Christianity; his conversion and his life. If his life was real, his conversion was true; and if his conversion was true, the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, and you have the supernatural.

Dr. Parker once said in his inimitable way that there are people who say that Paul's conversion was due to epilepsy. "Well," said Parker, "before the epilepsy he was a blasphemer; after the epilepsy he began to pray, and from that time forward he became a saint and a missionary and a noble warrior." Then said Parker, "Fly abroad, thou mighty epilepsy!"

Baur, fifty years ago, and men since his day, have admitted that the conversion of Paul is a psychological mystery. Of course it is! it is always a mystery to those who live in a mystery!

(b) *The morality of the Bible is another attestation.* How simple, yet how sufficient it is. It deals with principles, not with rules. I remember reading a book entitled *Enquire Within Upon Everything.* The ladies know all about that. The Bible is not a book of that sort, in the sense that it gives rules for everything, but it gives principles. It does not say whether you are to go to the theatre, or drink, or smoke, or that sort of thing; it says, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever, ye do, do all to the glory of God." There is the principle, and in the application of that test is our manhood and our Christianity.

Just think of this. There are ten commandments, and the proper division is not 1–4 and 5–10, but 1–5 and 6–10, the phrase "which the Lord thy God giveth thee" linking them all together. Parents are never our equals, but representatives of God, and therefore the commandment concerning them goes with the first section. Then comes the duty to our neighbour. You can divide them thus: 1 and 2, thoughts; 3, words; 4 and 5, actions; 6, 7 and 8, actions; 9, words; 10, thoughts. There you have thoughts, words and actions toward God; and actions, words and thoughts toward man. They were Jewish, for a number of slaves coming out of Egypt; and yet they are as applicable to us today.

And there is nothing new in the morality of the world since Jesus Christ came to this earth. Is it not wonderful? Here are we, nineteen hundred years since Jesus Christ came, and not a single new ethical thought has been discovered or said since the time of Jesus Christ and His apostles. We have had great philosophers and great moralists, great poets and great writers of prose, and not a single one can give a new thought that you cannot find in this Book. You notice, as Professor Romanes has said, that the world outgrows the teaching of other men, but it has not outgrown any of the teachings of Jesus Christ. It is one of the most striking things in the world that we have not outgrown the teaching of a Man who lived and died in one of the narrowest of countries—that of the Jews.

Here, then, are two of the attestations—the conversion of Paul, and all other conversions; and the morality of the New Testament; but there is a third—

(c) *The results of Christianity*, the effects of Christianity on life; the Father revealing, the Son expiating, and the Spirit equipping. Here is the key to the lock. Life is the problem, Christ is the solution; life is the question, and Christ is the answer.

If you want to know the results of Christianity, contrast it with those of other religions. If you want to know what Confucianism means, look at China. If you want to know what

Hinduism and Buddhism can do, look at India. If you want to know what Islam can do, look at Turkey and Persia.

Some years ago, when I was in Damascus, looking over that magnificent mosque, which used to be a Christian church, I noticed that the Turkish carpets on the ground were all fastened together roughly with hard thread, and I said to the dragoman who was conducting us, "Why are all these carpets fastened together like this?" He replied, "To keep those who come to pray from stealing them!" That is what Islam can do in the matter of ethics. They have no idea whatever of the connection between cause and effect, between principle and practice.

The Bible just shows what the Gospel can do. It calls a spade a spade, not "an instrument of husbandry." It does not speak of a man's wife as "the partner of his joys and sorrows." It is not like the curate who wanted to be very novel, and did not like to say "from the cradle to the grave," and so said, "from the bassinette to the sepulchre." No, the Bible does not speak like that; it calls things by their right names. Whether of David, or of Solomon, or of Peter, it says, "Thou art the man." The morality and the results of the Bible are its attestation.

Of course, we do not despise any of those religions to which I have referred. Everything that is good in them comes from God. They are what Tennyson calls "broken lights"—lights, but broken. But there is one great difference between them and Christianity; in each of these, man is seeking God; in Christianity, God is seeking man. These religions are aspirations; Christianity is a revelation.

So I draw to a conclusion by saying that God has spoken; and it is this Bible or no other. It calls for a personal test from every one of us. In the present day a great deal is said, and very rightly, about the argument from experience. If you will turn to 2 Timothy 1: 16–21, you will see three things: you will find Christ, you will find prophecy, and you will find experience. Christ is revealed to those apostles on the Mount of Transfiguration; then you have the word of prophecy; and then the word of prophecy made more sure by the light shining in the heart—"until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." These are the three things—prophecy in the Old Testament, Christ in the New, and both together verified by personal experience. If you and I will only put these things to the test, we shall have the verification in our own souls, and thereby the strongest possible proof that the Bible comes from God. There is no other book in the world that will so verify itself to human experience, because it contains and embodies a divine revelation. So, you see, we have the matter entirely in our own hands. Whatever may be said about history

and philosophy and morality, the crowning point is, What is the Bible to me? When the Bible is really and truly in my own heart and life, I cannot possibly doubt that it comes from God.

Father of mercies! in Thy Word
What endless glory shines!
For ever be Thy name adored
For these celestial lines.

II

THE BIBLE AS AN AUTHORITY

If God has spoken, then obviously His Word must be authoritative. Where the word of a king is, there is authority and power. So our present subject, "The Bible as an Authority," is the natural outcome of our consideration of the Bible as a revelation.

Now this question of authority naturally leads us into fields of difficulty, and unfortunately of controversy. I am afraid I shall have to ask your patience for a while if I deal with some difficult subjects; and perhaps also I shall have to ask your kind indulgence if I deal, however lightly, with certain controversial subjects. We want as far as possible to avoid anything purely controversial, and yet at the same time to show where we stand in regard to the Bible as an authority in connection with our spiritual life and the particular truths that bring us together this week.

I would like to say, if I may, at the outset, that we must not hesitate to face modern difficulties, controversies and problems, because they necessarily come before us at every part of the way, and in almost every aspect of Christian life and experience. It would never do for any Christian man or woman to ignore difficulties. It would be easy to do so. It is sometimes called the ostrich policy of burying the head in the sand; but it does not work well.

I read somewhere of an old clergyman—so the story goes—that he came across a very difficult text, and he said, "Brethren, this is a very difficult text; we will look it in the face and then pass on." That is interesting, but it is not convincing. A little girl in whom I am particularly interested was once in the habit of giving a Sunday-school lesson to her dolls every Sunday morning. She was overheard one morning to take 1 Corinthians 9: 1; and as her dolls were all round her she said, "'Am I not an apostle?' Yes, children, you are all apostles. 'Am I not free?' Yes, children, you are all free. 'Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?' Well, children, that is very difficult; we will sing a hymn." That is a delightful way of solving problems, but somehow or other, all the hymns in the world do not settle the matter!

So we must look at the Bible as our authority. It is at the foundation of all matters of belief and practice. The question of authority is vital, for it touches us at every point. The fundamental question is, What is the final and ultimate authority in matters of religion? What is truth? Where can truth be found? Where is the last and ultimate and final word concerning God and life and eternity?

Now in order that we may try to answer this question, will you kindly follow me step by step in some brief considerations. First of all, *the need of authority*. The necessity is recognized in every walk of life—the authority of the schoolmaster over the child, the authority of the parent over his boys and girls, the authority of the tutor in the college over the student, authority in professional life, artistic life, scientific life. Authority is recognized as vital and essential everywhere. Truth is needed; and it is also essential in connection with religion. Authority has been rightly defined or described as "the existence of an ethical standard."

Man, even as man, needs a guide. We were never intended to be independent. Our very nature is limited, and requires guidance and authority. But still more, man as a sinner needs authority amidst all the sins and sorrows of life, its difficulties, its problems, its perplexities. Man needs an authoritative guide concerning things spiritual and eternal. Two things are necessary for every life—truth, and the eye to see it.

That brings me, secondly, to *the source of authority*. Where is this need to be satisfied? The answer, of course, is that God is the source of truth and of righteousness and of guidance. And authority is found in revelation. The revelation with which we have been concerned, God's own revelation, must of necessity be our authority; and for our present purpose it will suffice us to say that Christ, as representing God, revealing God, is our ultimate authority. The source of all authority is the Lord Jesus Christ. So far, I do not suppose that there will be any real difficulty. But at once we are reminded of this—God is invisible; Christ is no longer here; where then can this Divine authority be found? Where is it embodied? How can I be sure of God as the source of authority? How can I be sure of Christ as the expression of the mind and will of God?

That brings me to my third point, *the seat of authority*. We have to face this question—Where is the revelation of God to be found? I suppose there are only three usual, perhaps only three possible answers; and it is in connection with these three answers that controversy to some extent seems inevitable. There are those who say that the seat of authority is in human reason. I am using the word reason to represent what is sometimes spoken of as life,

including reason and conscience; but reason will suffice. There are those who say that the consent of the mind is the condition and foundation of all certitude. Mark that! Now let us be very clear at this point. Reason is valuable and necessary. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind." The mind is an essential part of human nature, and is required to test the claims, and then also to receive revelation thus attested. Long, long ago Butler said that reason is the only faculty for judging anything, even revelation; and there can be no authority that distorts human reason. There can be no authority that subverts and stultifies the mind that God has given to us. The right of every man to verify is inalienable, a prerogative that is essential. "Prove all things," said the apostle, as well as "Hold fast that which is good"; and indeed, it is only possible to hold fast that which is good when we have proved all things. Again and again St. Paul speaks of "discerning"; first to prove and then to approve.

But this is all very different from claiming that reason is the seat of authority. After all, reason is only one of several faculties, and all these faculties have been affected by sin. Besides, there is such a thing as reality independent of reason. What is truth? Truth is not what I trow; though that definition or etymological suggestion has often been made. Truth is fact. Truth is not dependent upon the changing opinions of man; truth is truth whether I accept it or not. A thing must be true before I can accept it as true. So reason is not originative, it is not creative; it is only a channel; not a source, but a medium. Our reason never creates anything; it only weighs data and settles things as the result of weighing them. Authority, then, is not against reason, but in accordance with reason. So we conclude—I will look at this in another connection presently—that reason is not the seat of authority.

Others say the Church is the seat of authority. Well, of course, we at once ask, Where is that Church to be found? You know the Church, in the fullest sense of the word, is best expressed and described as "the blessed company of all faithful people"; and as such the Church is the product of divine revelation. The Church came into existence on the day of Pentecost by accepting divine revelation. If you go a little further back, the Jewish Church came into existence by accepting divine revelation; and if you go a little further back you will find that Abraham came into existence as a believer as the result of this, "The word of the Lord came unto Abraham" (Gen. 15: 1). So you can go back to Adam, if you like, and everything presupposes a divine revelation which is the foundation of all the religions, whether individual

or corporate, that the world has ever seen. Therefore, as the Church is the product of divine revelation, it is difficult to see how it can be the seat of authority. The Church can hardly embody, it certainly cannot create its Creator.

So we come to this: the other answer to the question, Where is the seat of authority? is, the Bible. And if what I have said is true, that God has spoken pre-eminently through the Bible, then the Bible is pre-eminently our authority. Now we must look at this carefully. We believe the Bible to be the seat of authority because the Scripture preserves the revelation of Christ in its purest and clearest form. Christianity is an historical religion. You and I are a long way from the commencement of Christianity. Christianity started centuries ago, and has been ever since an historical religion. Now what we need today is the very best form of that historical religion that we can find. It does not at all matter where it is, or what it is, or how it has come, so long as we can make sure here and now that we have the very best available form of the religion of Christ. It might come through a man, it might come through an institution, it might come through a book; but I do not mind at all about the vehicle, so long as we can make sure we have the very best available.

Now Christianity is at once life and literature; and life seems to require literature for its nourishment. I have already said, and will say again—it is at least significant that all the great religions of the world have their books. It would seem as if a book were really necessary for the maintenance and continuation of a religion. Literature is the nearest possible approach to reliability. Truth in literary form has four qualities which are pre-eminently necessary for a world-wide religion. Truth in literary form has *durability. Litera scripta manet*—"The written word abides." There is that about the written word, or about any written form of communication, that stands the test of durability.

Secondly, *catholicity.* There is a universal element in a written form which appeals and applies to the whole world. The Bible, by way of illustration, is the easiest book to translate into universal language today. I wonder what China or Uganda would make of one of Shakespeare's plays? I would like to see Hamlet done into Japanese, with the preservation of the aroma of that genius! Why, everyone knows how impossible it is to translate Heine's ballads into English. There are French poems of exquisite suggestion that you cannot possibly put into English. But the Bible is a Book of universal—shall I use the word—interpretability? And it is this catholicity that makes the Bible so valuable.

Thirdly, there is *fixity* about the written word that makes it so essential and important for the religious life.

Fourthly, you can have a *purity* in connection with writing that you cannot possibly have in other ways.

You cannot be sure of these four in reason, because that is unsafe. You cannot be sure of these four in any institution, for that is always uncertain.

And this written form of the Bible as the best available form is guaranteed to us by the fact that the New Testament has come from uniquely qualified men. I remember once in conversation with a friend asking him this question, "What is the ultimate reason why you accept the New Testament? Deep down below everything else, what is it that causes you to accept that, and perhaps reject other books?" My friend said that he did not know that he had ever really faced it in that way; so I went on, "Do you accept the New Testament because it is old? Why, there are still older books. Do you accept the New Testament because it is helpful? There are other helpful books. Do you accept the New Testament because it contains truth? Well, there are several books that contain truth." No; beneath its age, beneath its helpfulness, beneath its truthfulness, is the bedrock: this Book came from men who were uniquely qualified to convey God's will to men. The bedrock of our acceptance of the New Testament is what is called in technical language, "Apostolicity," because the books came from apostolic authors, or through apostolic sanction. I am not now concerned with authorship, but with sanction. These books came from apostolic men. Out of the eight writers of the New Testament, five were apostles, and the other three were immediate associates of the apostles. If some of you like to look at this in Dr. Sanday's Bampton Lectures on "Inspiration," you will see that the primary idea of our acceptance of the New Testament is what is called "Apostolicity."

"Ah, but then," someone says, "is not this what is called 'Bibliolatry'?" Well, do not be afraid of words! No, it is not. You do not interpose the Bible between yourself and Christ; you use the Bible as the medium by which to come to Christ. I do not know that if I go out tonight and desire to see the stars, a telescope will be an interposition; it will be a medium. The telescope will not be a hindrance; it will be a help. The Bible is the telescope by which we are enabled to see the Lord Jesus Christ.

When a boy receives a letter from his mother, his schoolfellows may say, "Oh, how perfectly absurd for you to trouble about a little bit of paper like that!" "Ah," says the boy, "it is not the paper; it is what is on it, and it is whence it came. That letter represents my mother's interests, my mother's wishes, my mother's love; and so far from that being a hindrance, it is the very help of helps, as I am not in my mother's presence." So the

Scriptures do two things: they provide truth for our acceptance, and they provide material for our experience. They bring us face to face with the Lord Jesus Christ. So you see how far we have travelled. Not reason, not the Church, but the Bible is the seat of authority.

Now then, please, point number four, the *nature* of this authority. It is *a spiritual authority*. Some familiar words, to some of us at least, are these: "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation." Yes, it is a Book of salvation; it is a guide to salvation. It reveals the Lord Jesus Christ as our spiritual Teacher, our spiritual Redeemer, and our spiritual Master, Prophet, Priest and King.

Authority always declares itself by its moral and spiritual proofs. You remember the one time in our Lord's life when His authority was definitely questioned—"Who gave Thee this authority? By whose authority doest Thou these things?" Our Lord replied, "The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?" They saw at once what that would involve, and they answered, "We cannot tell." Quite so! The moral proofs of John's authority were so great that if they had answered they would have committed themselves and condemned themselves. The authority of the Bible is therefore spiritual, because it reveals Christ as a Saviour and produces spiritual results.

Then, secondly, it is *supreme*. Now here again we must go a little into controversy. The Bible is supreme over reason. Reason is human; the Bible, though it has human elements, is guaranteed by what we believe to be divine inspiration. The Bible is our guide as the light of reason and as the guide of human thought. Revelation, because it comes from God, cannot possibly dishonour reason, which also comes from God. Reason is the judge of our need of revelation; reason examines the claims of revelation; but once those claims are accepted, reason takes a subordinate place, and revelation is supreme.

I am very fond of an illustration which I read years ago on this point, and perhaps it may help others. This morning in one of the prisons a warrant comes to the Governor, ordering that a certain criminal who has been condemned to death should be executed. What has the Governor to do? He has to examine that warrant; he has to look at its seal; he has to be sure of the signature; he has to take every possible precaution that he can to see that it is genuine, that it is not a fraud, but that it actually does come from those in authority; and when he has thus made sure of that warrant, he has to obey it. He cannot alter the date of the execution; he cannot alter the form of the execution; he can do nothing but submit himself to that warrant of whose

authenticity he has become convinced. That is reason. Reason examines, tests, sifts, enquires; but the moment reason has become convinced that this has come from God, like Joshua of old it says, "What saith my Lord unto His servant?" So though revelation is supreme over reason, reason examines the credentials of revelation and then submits to them.

You have this illustrated in a well-known passage. Even an apostle was not accepted at Berea. They listened carefully and respectfully, but we are told that they "searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17: 11). And when they were convinced that those things were so, that the apostle's word and the Scriptures agreed, they obeyed and accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. So Christ is our authority; and when we are assured that the Bible is the best form of that authority, we submit to it, and it is supreme over our reason and life.

But here again, the Bible is supreme over the Church. "Ah, but," someone says, "how can this be?" Scripture is the title deeds of the Church, a warrant for the Church's life. People say, "But that is impossible. The Church was in existence at least twenty years before the New Testament was written." The Church was before the Bible, but does it follow that the Church is above the Bible? because that is where the fallacy might possibly creep in. But was the Church without a Bible? That is the point. For those twenty years had they no Bible? One of our greatest scholars, Mr. C. H. Turner, of Oxford, said that there was a truth in that statement that the Church was before the Bible; but he added, "If you had said that to any early Christian, he would have stared at you in undisguised amazement." Of course he would, because he would have said, "We have a Bible, the Old Testament, and it speaks to us of Christ." The apostle Paul says concerning that Old Testament, that with the one simple condition of faith in Christ Jesus, it is able to make wise unto salvation. I should not be at all surprised today, if we had no New Testament at all, and you put an Old Testament into a man's hand and told him of Christ, that would make him wise unto salvation. And what Paul thought of the Old Testament, I think you and I might very fairly follow.

But I want to leave that on one side altogether. It is perfectly true that the Church had no New Testament for a long time, for twenty years—and if you like to make it forty, help yourself to the other twenty! They had not a complete New Testament for a long time, that is perfectly true; but I want you to notice this: they had not the written Word, but they had the spoken Word from the day of Pentecost onwards, and the Church came into

existence by believing the spoken Word. As long as the apostles were at hand, the spoken Word was sufficient; but by-and-by, when they went from place to place, and afterwards died, it was essential to embody in another form that spoken revelation, and so afterwards came the written form. Now you see at once, it does not very much matter whether it was spoken or written, so long as you can be sure that it is a revelation from God. I am perfectly certain that if the apostle Paul were here this morning speaking, we should listen to him just as carefully as we should read one of his writings. The process, whether spoken or written, matters very little so long as we can be sure that the speaking or the writing comes from God. Therefore it is perfectly true that the written Word came after the Church; but the spoken Word came before the Church.

Now by way of illustration. You know there was a Church in Uganda long before Mackay and Pilkington could put the Gospel into writing. When the missionaries went first of all, they preached the Word and it was accepted, at least by some, and there was a Church at least some time before anything could be put into writing. And there was a Church on the day of Pentecost through the spoken Word of the apostles long before there was any written Word; and that is where the fallacy comes in. The Church, therefore, is a "witness and a keeper," but not a maker, of Holy Scripture.

One of the hymns we sing is—

> The Church from her dear Master
> Received that gift divine . . .

Now I want to ask you this question, Did the Church of Rome write the Epistle to the Romans? Was the Church of Rome the maker of that epistle? Did the Church of Ephesus make the Epistle to the Ephesians? It was an apostle who wrote the Epistle to the Church at Rome, and it was Scripture from the moment they accepted it at his hand. Why? John the apostle said, "I wrote unto the Church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not." It was not the Church; it was the apostles as representing Christ who gave first the spoken and then the written Word of God. So those familiar words in the Article of our Church, "The Church is a witness and a keeper," are literally true. The Church too, through the ages, has witnessed to what is Scripture; the Church has kept Scripture—the world would like to destroy it at once if it were possible—but the Church never made Scripture.

My honoured and good friend Dr. Waller, of Highbury, showed

this some years ago in a very simple way. He said, "According to the argument of some, the Church is before Scripture; the Church is therefore the maker of Scripture. Well, you might as well say —Mr. Balfour wrote *The Foundations of Belief*; Mr. Balfour is a member of the Privy Council; therefore the Privy Council wrote *The Foundations of Belief*." You might as well say this: "The apostles were members of the Church; the apostles wrote Scripture; therefore the Church wrote Scripture." The argument is just the same, and the fallacy is the assumption that Mr. Balfour wrote *The Foundations of Belief* as a member of the Privy Council, whereas he wrote it in his personal capacity. The apostles wrote the New Testament as the representatives of Christ, not as members of the Church. So we say again—if we keep this in view it will help us—the Lord Jesus is the supreme authority, and we accept the Bible because it enshrines and embodies that authority. Take away Christ from the Bible, and there is no Bible worth having. We do not bow down to the Book because it is a Book; we do not repudiate reason because it is reason; we do not set aside the Church because it is the Church; we say that what we want is the very best available form of Christ's revelation, and we believe we get that in the Bible, and in no other way.

The Word of God is therefore that which gives us a fixed and objective embodiment of the revelation of God in Christ, and as such it is, of course, supreme for everything connected with the Church. Let us not make any mistake. The moral authority of the whole Church is very important. When the whole Church bears witness to the Deity of Jesus Christ we are very rash, not to say mad, if we individually reject that. But nevertheless, when you have said everything for the moral authority of the Church; its work is that of a witness, not of a Creator.

I am fond of quoting the words of Bishop Gore—not all his words! but these—"The Word of God in the Bible is the only testing ground of doctrine." That is as orthodox as you could wish! "The Word of God in the Bible is the only testing ground of doctrine." Of course Church belief, and what we should call Church tradition, tends to deteriorate in the course of time; it never abides fixed. If I were to whisper twenty words to Mr. Sloan, and he were to whisper those twenty words to Mr. Buchanan, and then they were to go all round the platform—we will leave the congregation out—when they got to Mr. Alexander there, and he were to come back to me and tell me them, I will undertake to say there would be more than twenty! Tradition would be easy of variation. You could not depend upon positive, comparative and superlative. We read that our Lord said to the Jews, "Ye made the commandment of God of none effect through

your tradition" (Matt. 15: 6). Again, Bishop Gore said some years ago, concerning the Jewish Church and the Mediaeval Church, that they had merged Scripture in a miscellaneous mass of authorities. But we do not believe in merging Scripture in a miscellaneous mass of authorities; we believe in one authority and that supreme.

Here again an illustration will help us. When you have a telegram, you require your reason to read the message. The wire that brought the message may represent the Church that has brought the Bible to your door; but the message is the real thing. So you get reason, the Church, and the Bible; and the message is the essential thing.

That brings me to this: the Bible is our authority, spiritual, supreme, and now *final*. The Old Testament could not claim finality for itself, because it was of gradual growth; and the New Testament for the same reason could not claim finality for itself. Of course you know that the words implying finality in the last chapter of the Revelation refer to that Book alone. But although you have not finality claimed in so many words, I want you to notice that the whole tone of the Bible involves and implies finality. You know, some of you fathers are not always saying to your boys, "Now, I am father here; I am supreme here!" You do not need to say that again and again; the boys know by your whole bearing and tone that you are the master; at least, they ought to! There is no need for the father or mother to say, "I am supreme in this household," because the boys and girls would soon show a little disrespect to them. The whole bearing of father and mother is sufficient; and the whole bearing of Scripture shows its finality.

In Isaiah 8: 20 we read, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," or "there is no morning in them." "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24: 35). "Adulterating the Word of God" (2 Cor. 4: 2). "The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Eph. 6: 17). "When ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God" (1 Thess. 2: 13). "All Scripture God-breathed is profitable" (2 Tim. 3: 16). However you take that, it refers to the authority of the Old Testament. The "seed" which is "the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1: 23). Our Lord Jesus Christ in His life on earth bore testimony again and again to His own submission to that authority, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till it be fulfilled" (Matt. 5: 18). "The Scripture cannot be

broken" (John 10: 35). So we believe that the whole attitude of Scripture bears testimony to its finality.

Also the general tenor of the early Church is in the same direction. Read the earliest Fathers of the first three centuries, and you will find witness after witness to the supremacy and finality of the Word of God. In that great Council of Chalcedon, in front of all the delegates there was on the table the Gospels, as a silent testimony to the final court of appeal. Every heresy was claimed to be based on Scripture. Ancient books of worship, like the liturgies, are simply saturated with Scripture. The most severe attacks of opponents have always been on Scripture.

Experience tells the same story. Everyone knows also from Church history that the Lord Jesus Christ has never revealed Himself fully apart from the Bible. Where the Bible has been neglected, Christ has been thereby neglected, and Christianity has burned low. The oldest view that we know in connection with this subject is the supremacy of the Bible, the finality of the Bible in relation to the revelation of God in Christ. That is my answer to the nature of this authority: it is spiritual, it is supreme, it is final.

Now last of all, the power of this authority, *the power of the Bible.* I shall look again at this, in our final Bible Reading, in another connection. But here I want to notice that as an authority we use this Book against every form of what is called *rationalism.* We meet every form of rationalism properly so called, with the Bible. We use it against a false and un-Scriptural *mysticism*—I mean that which emphasises what is called the "inner light" against the written Word. We have to be very careful about what is often called the "inner light," and impressions which come into the mind which we think are the messages of God when perhaps they are contrary to the Word of God. A young man once went to Spurgeon, so I have heard more than once, and said that the Lord had told him that he was to enter the Pastors' College. "Well," said Spurgeon, "I am in daily, almost hourly communication with the Lord, and He has not told me anything of the sort!" When you hear a person say the Lord told him this or that, be very careful! When a young fellow in America told his mother that the Lord had called him to preach the Gospel, she said, "Are you sure it was not some other noise you heard?" Another fellow, in the negro quarter, said he had seen it written on the sky, "G.P.C."—"Go, preach Christ." Said his mother, "That meant, 'Go, pick cotton'." We must be very careful about impressions which are not necessarily those of the Word of God.

But we also use this authority against every form of *scepticism.*

Here is a little Book—this is, I suppose, the smallest form in which the complete volume can be obtained—which has moulded literature, coloured civilization, affected every philosophy, transformed individuals, and uplifted communities; and it is because of that that we face scepticism with it day by day.

We also use it against every form of *individualism*—I mean the people who are always thinking of the Bible as a Book of rules. It is not a Book of rules; it is a Book of principles. It would be very easy, as I have said, to think of the Bible as a Book of rules, but it would not minister to our spiritual manhood and womanhood. God calls upon us to look at the great principles, and apply them and turn them into rules for our daily living. Therefore against every form of individualism, this authority is supreme.

Then we say that it is our authority against every form of *ecclesiasticism*. We say that it is our supreme and final authority concerning religion. "What saith the Scriptures?" is our enquiry when we are faced with anything concerning the Church or Christianity which is said to be essential.

Then last of all, and greatest of all, we use this Book as our authority for *spiritual life* and preaching and practice. Preachers must know this Book if they are to preach acceptably. If we go to our people with "Thus saith the Lord," this Book must be in mind and heart and life. There is no Christianity worthy of the name that is not based upon this Book. There is no spiritual life, at Keswick or anywhere else, that is not found suffused, permeated, dominated, by Holy Scripture; and it is this, above all else, that gives the Bible its authority and leads us to say, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." By this Book we stand; on it we rest; with it we fight; through it we shall conquer, because it is "the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever."

III

THE BIBLE AS A MESSAGE

If God has spoken to us in the Bible, and if this divine revelation is our supreme authority, it is, of course, essential that we should know its contents; what it says, what it means to say. In a word, what is its message? That is our present subject: the message of the Bible. The answer to that question, What is the message of the Bible? is found in one word—*Christ.* During the last fifty years, quite a number of Lives of Christ have been written, representing all sorts and sizes and standpoints. To mention only a few of them, we think of Neander, Lange, de Pressense; in our own country, Farrar, Geikie, and Edersheim; not to go further afield or to deal with more recent events. But for the most part these lives are characterised by one feature. They commence at Bethlehem, and they end at Olivet. But our Lord's life did not begin at Bethlehem, nor did it end with the Ascension. Therefore the life of Christ should cover the whole of the Bible; and that is why I say that the message of the Bible is *Christ.* Christ is the message of Scripture from beginning to end; to use the title of a well-known book by an honoured friend, Miss Hodgkin, *Christ in all the Scriptures.* I have been told that in the British Navy every piece of rope has a red thread running through it, so that whenever you cut it in any part, or whenever anyone should happen to help themselves to it, they can always be detected, and it can be proved by that red thread running from end to end that it belongs to the British Navy. There is a thread running through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and that is *Christ.* If you look at the Bible, at almost any part, you will find traces of that thread and aspects of that message of the Christ.

But someone says, "Does not this mean twisting the Bible to mean Christ?" No, it does not. As someone has said, "The real danger is twisting away from Christ in the Bible." We must be careful about that. Of course we know it is possible to go to extremes. There was a time when some very devoted man saw Joseph of Aramathea in the first Psalm—that he was the man of God depicted there. But we have gone to the other extreme, and we do not see anybody in that Psalm! We believe in neither

of these extremes; but we believe that Christ is the substance of all Scripture. "How are we to look at it?" My subject is at least fairly large and comprehensive.

I. *Christ in the glory of the eternal past.* That is where His life commenced. John 1: 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." That is the commencement of anything we know of the Lord Jesus Christ—when He was at home in heaven, when He was with the Father. The Eternal Father had an Eternal Son, and the Lord Jesus Christ is revealed to us in Scripture as the unique Son of God, in the sense that no other person could possibly be a Son. Passages like the personification of wisdom (Prov. 8) and other passages should be associated with John 1: 1, in the study of Christ in the glory of the eternal past.

II. *Christ in the glory and the act of Creation.* John 1: 3, "All things were made by Him." Colossians 1: 15, 16, "He is the firstborn of all creation; by Him were all things created." Hebrews 1: 2, "By whom also God made the ages." This is what Lightfoot long ago called the "cosmic relations of Christ" and it adds immensely to the glory of our Lord when we think of Him not only as our Redeemer, but as One through whom God created the world. When we look up into the sky we say, "Christ made those stars"; when we look over the landscape we say, "Christ is responsible for that"; and so whenever we think of Christ in the light of that great Colossian passage we think of Christ Jesus as God's medium or instrument for the making of all things. You will find many passages that can be associated with this period of our Lord's life—His association with Creation.

III. *Christ in the glory of the revelation of the Old Testament.* It would seem as though the divine purpose had been fellowship between God and man. But that purpose failed three times over. It failed, first, in Adam; it failed, next, in Seth and his line; and it failed in Noah. Then He had to make a fresh start with Abraham, and introduced a new method—a covenant, not of works, but of grace; and from the time of Abraham onward the story of the Old Testament is pre-eminently grace, though also for the purpose of grace a record of works in the Mosaic Law. But all through the time, from the beginning to the end, there are these two lines of teaching: God was preparing the Messiah for the people, and He was preparing the people for the Messiah. Right along from Genesis to Malachi these two processes are at work. As we look at the Old Testament, first of all from the standpoint of the Jews, we see in the Pentateuch the divine religion of delivered redemption in the history of the Jews, the divine religion of redemption developed in the prophetical and poetical

books. That is the Old Testament view of religion. From the standpoint of the Messiah, we see something similar. In the Pentateuch it is the Messiah pre-eminently as Priest, in the historical books it is pre-eminently the Messiah as King, in the prophetical and poetical books it is pre-eminently the Messiah as Prophet. The Prophet is to reveal, the Priest to redeem, the King to rule. "Jesus, my Prophet, Priest and King."

Let me say here that we do ourselves and our people immense injury when we avoid preaching sermons from the Old Testament. As someone has said, "We must not rob the children of at least one-half of their bread." I know a dear friend who used to preach for the most part from the New Testament, and in particular from St. John and Romans; occasionally he wandered into Isaiah 53. But I am perfectly certain if all his sermons for one year were counted and classified, his use of the Old Testament would be seen to be very small. Whenever you went to his church you were sure of hearing Romans 5! Dr. R. W. Dale used to keep two slips of paper in his study, and put on them the subjects and texts of his sermon—one for the O.T. and the other N.T.—and look at them from time to time, in order that he might preserve some proportion in his preaching. It would be well for us, from time to time, to remember that the Old Testament, on any showing whatever, is full of the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. *We have the story of Christ in the glory of His Incarnation.* Here we are concerned with the Gospels; and we shall find in these, as we know, four pictures of the one Christ. An American author describes these Gospels in these terms: "Matthew gives the profile picture in the light of the Jewish past; Mark gives the steel engraving in the strength of the present; Luke gives a half-tone portrait, the blend of the humanity and divinity; John gives a life-sized picture in the fullness of His Person and work." Or to refer to another author: "Matthew is the Gospel for the Jews; Mark for the Romans; Luke for the Greeks; and John for the whole world." Matthew demonstrates, Mark describes, Luke depicts, John declares. When you look at the life of Jesus Christ as a whole, you easily see the four marks or stages pointed out long ago by Dr. Stalker. The first year was the year of preparation; the second the year of obscurity; the third the year of popularity; and then the third closes with opposition. There you get the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Think of the *teaching* of the Lord Jesus Christ. And let me say here that I never say "the teaching of *Jesus*." He is not only Jesus now, but He is the Lord Jesus. You will notice that in the first four chapters of John, the Judaean ministry, the teaching was of the Messiahship. From the beginning of the Galilean ministry

(Matt. 4–7, to the end of the Sermon on the Mount), the theme was the kingdom of God. From Matthew 8 to the time of Caesarea Philippi, it was the Person of the Messiah. From Caesarea Philippi to His interview with the Greeks, it was the death of the Messiah. During the last week in Jerusalem, it was the Second Coming, or the future. On the last night in the upper room, it was the dispensation of the Spirit—"In that day." After the resurrection it was the great commission, "Go ye into all the world," found in the four Gospels and also in Acts 1. The Messiah, the Kingdom, the Person, the Sufferings, the Advent, the Holy Spirit, and the Great Commission. That is the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospels.

What are we to say about His *work*? Three things. You see, in that, His life followed by His death, followed by His resurrection, and crowned by His ascension. As Dr. Dale said, "Jesus Christ did not come to preach the Gospel; He came that there might be a Gospel to preach." That is Christ in the glory of His Incarnation.

V. *Christ in the glory of His position in the Church.* This is the Christ of Acts, and the Christ of the epistles. The Acts of the Apostles is a book that has been incorrectly named. It should be called the Acts of the Exalted Christ, for right through that great and wonderful book you will find the Lord Jesus Christ as the living worker by the Holy Spirit. The apostles were not the agents, but only instruments. Just as Luke's Gospel tells us what He began to say and to teach until His ascension, so the Acts of the Apostles goes on to tell us what He continued to do and teach after His ascension. If you will run your mind through that book, from chapter 1 to 28, with the thought of the living Christ, you will see these three things: Christ as Lord, Christ as life, and Christ as law. You find the Gospel of the resurrection, the Gospel of the kingdom, and the Gospel of forgiveness proclaimed all through this book. They proclaimed the resurrection to prove that He was God. In obedience to their Master they proclaimed the Gospel of the kingdom. But inasmuch as all men are rebels and were not in the kingdom, they had to proclaim the Gospel of pardon. These are the threefold message of the Acts of the Apostles: Christ as Saviour, the Forgiver; Christ as Lord; and Christ as God. So also with regard to the epistles. You will find just the same thing. Christ is all. Paul is the apostle of faith, John is the apostle of love, Peter is the apostle of hope. Christ is the Redeemer, Christ is the Priest, and Christ is the Master. All through this great section, Christ is in the glory of His position in the Church of the living God.

VI. *Christ in the glory of His Second Coming, or His Advent.* We

sometimes sing, "Jesus, my Prophet, Priest, and King." But we do well to remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is not yet King. He is on the right hand of His Father's throne; He has not taken up His seat on His own throne yet. If you look into the Gospels, Christ is the King of the Jews. If you look in the Acts and the epistles, practically nothing is said of Christ Jesus as King, and never once is He called King of the Church, but only the Lord of the Church. But when you look in the Apocalypse, and look to the future, He is King of the Jews and King of kings. So that theologically and strictly it is not right to call Christ King now. He is Prophet in the past, He is Priest and Lord in the present, He is going to be King in the future.

Have you noticed the three appearings of Christ (in Heb. 9: 24, 26, 28)? They represent different Greek words, but the thought is there, even though you do not get it exactly in the English. Hebrews 9: 26, "He appeared to put away sin"—Christ in the past. Hebrews 9: 24, "Now to appear in the presence of God for us"—Christ in the present. Hebrews 9: 28, "to them that look for Him shall He appear"—Christ in the future and the glory. That future is very prominent in the New Testament, and in the Old. The first part of it is that He is coming for His people (1 Thess. 4). He is coming, as we often say, for His own. When every member of His Body has been won, and when that Body is completed, He is coming, not to the earth, but into the air *for* His people. Then He will be coming *with* His people. I am not concerned with details. Obviously that would be impossible for me to attempt. But I ask you to notice the glory of this future when He will come with His saints, and then reign over the earth, ushering in what we believe to be the Millennium, that wonderful time of which the Old Testament is so full.

If you want to know all about the Millennium, you need not trouble to limit yourself to Revelation 20; you can look at Isaiah 4, 9, 25, 35, 65 and 66; and if you are not convinced about the Millennium from those passages, nothing will convince you. We must be very careful when we read chapters 40 and 60. I have a Bible here which tells me in the heading of chapter 43, "The Church comforted." But when I look down below, I find there is nothing about the Church at all; it is *Israel*. The Church is not quoted from chapter 10 to chapter 46. As someone has said, we have helped ourselves to all the blessings, and left the Jews the curses. The Lord Jesus Christ is coming to introduce a reign of peace and quiet and rest such as will be found in those passages, and you cannot spiritualise those passages without making them absolutely meaningless. If these passages do not mean what they say of some wonderful time in the future never yet realised,

then we might as well close a good deal of the Old Testament prophets. Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ has been given the throne. Luke 1: 32, 33, "And the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever." In Psalm 2 there is another picture; and in Psalm 72 there is another. The Old Testament is full of that glory when the Lord Jesus Christ shall be on His throne—Christ in the glory of His Advent, coming for His people, and then coming with His people. We can put into this section three hundred odd passages about the coming of the Lord, which you find in the Bible.

VII. *Christ in the glory of the future eternity.* You will find that at the end of our Lord's reign on the earth. The great white throne will be set up, and judgment will be executed. Then He will deliver the kingdom to the Father, when "God shall be all in all." You will find, last of all, the eternal home; and almost the last picture is that of the throne of God and of the Lamb in it, at the end of Revelation. So you notice Christ with an essential glory, as theologians tell us, and with an acquired glory. He has an essential glory, as He had with the Father before the world was. He has an acquired glory by reason of His redemptive work. God raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory; God highly exalted Him, and gave Him a Name that is above every other name. In Philippians 2, 1 Peter 1, and other passages, you will find the glory of redemption, and following that the essential glory which was His by His pre-existence with the Father.

We have, therefore, as we think of all these things, Christ pre-existent, Christ predicted, Christ proclaimed, Christ possessed, Christ promised. From beginning to end the Bible is full of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are just these two points of practical application. I have of necessity hurried over this outline; but I know that you will be able to fill in the details for yourselves. But I would beg of you to remember that the Lord Jesus Christ lived before Bethlehem, and that He did not finish His life on Olivet.

We must study the Bible with this key. First, we want to *look at the Bible from God's point of view.* I went once to the Doré Gallery to see a picture. They told me to stand at a particular spot before "Christ Leaving the Praetorium," so that I might view the picture from the standpoint of the artist. That is what we need to do in regard to the Bible—to look at it from the standpoint of the Author, God Himself; from the standpoint of His purpose, from the standpoint of His plan. His purpose is redemption, and His plan is through the Lord Jesus Christ. I often think of this illustration, and I will not even apologise for

mentioning so familiar a one, although it is so frequently used. Dr. A. J. Gordon, of Boston, was one day at home with his children, and to keep them quiet he gave them a jig-saw puzzle. To his surprise he found that very soon they had completed the puzzle, and he asked, "How did you do it so soon?" "Oh, there was a picture of a man on the back, and we knew how to do it." Just so, the picture of the Man in the Bible is the Lord Jesus Christ, and if you can take that as your key, you will find that you can fit in every part of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. An American statesman was once asked by a friend, "Can you understand how Jesus Christ can be both God and man?" "No, I cannot; but I should be ashamed to do it, because if I could I should know that He was no greater than myself." "God manifest in the flesh." "God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself." "God over all, blessed for ever."

The second thing about this is, that *we must proclaim it with all our hearts*. This message of the Bible calls for proclamation. There must be the testimony of our lives; there must be what is called personal work done for souls, as we bring to bear upon them the Lord Jesus Christ.

Shall I tell you what I think is one of the dangers of Keswick?—the danger of appreciation without application; the danger of reception without reproduction; the danger of complacency without compassion. Some years ago I had the great joy of a sail over the Lake of Galilee. In the course of nine weeks I had only had an opportunity of drinking water twice. I was warned, and had to pay heavily. But at the Lake of Galilee they told me I could drink; and I did drink. I put down my cup and drank, again and again, and enjoyed the freshness of that water. Why? Right in the north—there it comes in; right in the south, there it goes out. It is always taking in, and always pouring out—and it is fresh. A little while afterwards I went to the Dead Sea. There you would not find me drinking the water. I put my finger in, and very soon it was marked with salt. Why? That sea is receiving, and never giving out. The reason why it is dead is that it does not pass on what it receives. There, I repeat, is the danger of Keswick. The message of the Lord Jesus Christ is for reception, and it is for reproduction. A lady full of self-complacency was once singing—

Jesus, I am resting, resting,
In the joy of what Thou art;
I am finding out the greatness
Of Thy loving heart.

A friend who was very frank, and on the best of terms with her, said—he knew her privately in her own attainments—"Those words do not truthfully express your experience." "Yes, they do, exactly." "No, pardon me, I fancy this would be more true—

Jesus, I am resting, resting,
In the joy of what I am;
I have overcome my temper,
And become a lamb."

There is the danger of self-complacency. But if the Lord Jesus Christ is what He ought to be to every one of us, we shall receive, and then we shall pass on. Christ in us our atoning sacrifice; Christ in us our living power; Christ under us our sure foundation; Christ around us our wall of fire; Christ beside us, our blessed Master; Christ before us our everlasting heritage. As someone whose remains are in that churchyard nearby once said:

Yea, thro' life, death, thro' sorrow and thro' sinning,
He shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed:
Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,
Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ.

God forbid that we should glory, save in this adorable Lord of all.

IV

THE BIBLE AS A POWER

If God has spoken to us in the Bible, and if this divine revelation is our supreme and final authority; and if, as we have asserted, its message is Christ as the manifestation of God for human life, the next question is, How can this message become vital; how can it be made real in our life and work? The answer is, By the Holy Spirit; and therefore my subject, "The Bible as a Power," is really "The Holy Spirit in relation to the Bible."

I. *The source of the Bible.* We believe that the Bible comes from God, a divine source, through and by means of the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament prophets, for instance, claim to be the recipients of divine revelation. "The word of the Lord came," "The Lord spake," "The word of God," "God said," "The Lord commanded." Phrases like these are found nearly seven hundred times in the Pentateuch alone. Five hundred times Jeremiah claims to be actuated by God's command. Those phrases to which I have referred are found scattered throughout Scripture no less than three thousand times altogether. There is one verse which, whatever it means, clearly makes this claim—"The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was on my tongue" (2 Sam. 23: 2). In harmony with this in the Old Testament, we have in the New Testament the presence and power of the Holy Spirit claimed. It is sometimes overlooked that in several passages there is no reference whatever to the human author of Scripture, but only to the divine Author. In Hebrews 3: 7, "The Holy Ghost saith." What do you make of that? Then follows on part of Psalm 95, what we call the *Venite*, and it was written by David or somebody else; there is no reference to the human author at all. "The Holy Ghost saith." Therefore bear in mind that any collusion with manuscripts is a collusion of not merely what the psalmist said, but what the Holy Ghost said. So we say that the Holy Spirit is the author of the Scriptures.

II. *The instruments of the Bible.* The answer to that, is *men.* The Holy Spirit used men as the instruments of divine revelation. Here we come across a number of passages where the divine and the human are mentioned; and where this distinction is drawn

very clearly—the divine Author and the human instrument. Matthew 1: 22, "spoken of the Lord by the prophet." There is the divine source and the human instrument. Acts 1: 16, "The Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of David." 2 Peter 1: 21, "Holy men spake as they were carried along by the Holy Ghost." So that we have, as instruments of the Spirit's work, the men who were, first, the speakers, and then the writers of divine revelation.

III. *The media of the Bible.* I do not know of any other word that will express my idea better. The media of the Bible—*words.* The men, and then their words. The men who are not alive now; the men have been dead for many ages, and if we are to be in touch with their revelation it must be through their words: and if we are to be sure of the human revelation from God, then we must be sure of what they wrote, as they are not here to speak for themselves. You will notice, in 2 Timothy 3: 16, "Every writing is God-breathed." Let me say that I do not for our present purpose trouble in the least whether you take the Authorised or the Revised Version, because in both cases the reference is to the Old Testament, which is said to be God-breathed. Personally, I think the Revised Version is incorrect, and the Authorised is correct. If you want a proof of it, you will find in the Greek that this particular phrase (two adjectives connected with "and," without a verb) will be found nine times. The Revised Version has rendered them eight times, just as in the Authorised Version. Why the translators should have altered this, the ninth, is only known to them. But whether it is this, or that, the thought is that every writing is *God-breathed.* I do not know what that means, but I do know what it says. God, somehow or other, breathed into these writings, and therefore we are concerned with the words.

Lest I should go one step beyond what seems to be true, look at 1 Corinthians 2: 13. Notice that: because the whole of that passage is, as Dr. James Denney says, for the apostolic view of inspiration. Listen! "Words which the Holy Ghost teacheth." Could anything be more definite or clear than that? "Not the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth." So I suggest to you that there is an intimate connection, a necessary connection, between thoughts and words. I asked some friends the other evening whether they ever thought without words. I wonder whether I should be able to get any genuine idea of the chairman's mind, unless he told me a little about it? Whether for our own thought, or whether for intercourse between man and man, thoughts must be expressed in words. This is what Bishop Westcott says in his fine essay on "Inspiration"—"Thoughts are wedded to words as necessarily

as soul is wedded to body." Therefore when we speak of the media of the Bible, we are concerned with words.

But someone says, "Does not that mean verbal inspiration?" I do not trouble very much about the phrase. You can call it verbal inspiration if you like, so long as you do not call it dictation. When I dictate a letter to my secretary, I do not inspire her. There may be perspiration if I go too fast, but it is mechanical dictation. I expect her to reproduce exactly what I said to her. But here it is not mechanical dictation; it is inspiration—and whether you call it verbal or plenary, remember that the phrase is not intended to show how God does it, but how far it has gone; and inspiration extends to the form as well as to the substance. Inspiration extends to the words as well as to the thoughts, in order that we may be sure of the thoughts; for how can I know God's thoughts if I do not know God's words? This is what I mean by the media of the Bible—*words*.

But someone says, "The letter killeth; the Spirit giveth life." It does. But St. Paul in that phrase is not at all concerned with the letter of inspiration as opposed to the Spirit. That is an entirely false idea of the passage. That is doing what I have already warned against—taking the text without the context, and working out a pretext; and you must not do that, whether you are on this side or that. But someone says, "We want the inspiration of the thoughts, not of the words." Well, I wish you would tell me what you mean by the inspiration of the thoughts. What is your theory of inspiration, what do you really mean by the inspiration of the thoughts? If there is any inspiration or authority in the thoughts, surely it must be expressed in the words; and the objections that are raised to the inspiration of the words are just as valid against the inspiration of the thoughts. To show that I am not going, I believe, too far in saying this, let me ask you to notice 1 Corinthians 14: 37. I want to get this by a process of induction, so that we shall see really what Scripture says, and what it implies. "If any man think he is spiritual, let him acknowledge"—now notice!—"that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." There is the human—"things that I write," *words*. "Are the commandments of the Lord"—there is the divine inspiration and authority behind.

Shall I venture to say that the use of the Bible today is a wonderful confirmation of this view. We use the Bible today as our authoritative court of appeal; and we rest upon the Bible as our warrant. Greek, Hebrew, English concordances all bear upon the value, the meaning, the force of the words of Scripture. This is the view of the apostolic church. Bishop Westcott writes, "The doctrine of inspiration in the apostolic churches was super-

natural in source, unerring in truthfulness, and comprising words as well as subject matter." That was the view, I believe, of the apostolic churches, as he says, and of a good many churches since the apostolic days.

Then, too, there is the appeal of the New Testament to the Old. "It is"—what? "written." It is not simply, it is *thought*, it is *suggested*; but, it is *written*. Our Lord Himself said, in John 10, "The Scriptures cannot be broken." So we are on perfectly safe ground when we ask attention, at any rate, to the words of Scripture as the media of the men who spoke by the Holy Ghost. In that fine book by D. M. M'Intyre, *The Spirit in the Word*, is this quotation from Professor Smeaton: "Scripture is the Word of God inspired throughout by the Spirit of God in every part, and in human forms of expression."

IV. *The substance of Scripture.* What is the outcome of its source, its instruments, and its media? What is the outcome? *Truth.* That is the substance of the Bible. First of all, *truth in its reality.* The greatest Authority that we have—I want to use that phrase with deep reverence—the Lord Jesus Christ, said, "Thy word is truth." Truth in its reality is found in this Book. Let me quote Dr. Denney again. "When a man submits his mind to the Spirit, which is in the Bible, it never misleads him about the way of salvation. It brings him infallibly to that knowledge of God which is eternal life. The most vital truth about it is covered by the terms *Inspiration* and *Infallibility*, and in the power of its truth it is indispensable and authoritative to the thought of every age." There is much more to the same effect in Denney, but that will show you what I mean by truth in its reality.

Truth in its uniqueness. You can test the Holy Spirit in regard to the Bible in a very simple way. Take the writings of A.D. 50 to A.D. 100 and look at them; and the writings of A.D. 100 to A.D. 150 and look at them; and, as it has been well said, between the New Testament writings of A.D. 50 to A.D. 100 and the post-apostolic writings of A.D. 100 to A.D. 150 there is a chasm, sheer, deep and abysmal. During the time when Christianity was gradually settling itself in the world, from A.D. 50 to A.D. 100, the Holy Ghost was at work in a unique way, and we call that inspiration. The Holy Ghost was at work from A.D. 100 to A.D. 150, but we do not call that inspiration—we call it illumination. The Spirit of inspiration from A.D. 50 to A.D. 100; the Spirit of illumination from that time forward, and since that day there has been constant illumination but no new revelation. John Robinson, of Leyden, said, "The Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His Word." Yes; but it is *from His Word.* We have not got to the end of it yet, and it is the Holy Spirit who illuminates the sacred page.

Truth in its unity. There is a wonderful unity of truth in the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. Some years ago in the course of the construction of a tunnel in London, five shafts were sunk, and twelve sets of men worked in opposite directions, and ultimately the twelve sets of men met in one, although at a depth of 100 feet. They were working practically in the dark, but they fitted together so well that when the tunnel was complete everyone could see that a master mind had planned the whole thing. And so various writers of the Old and New Testaments were working separately as in a tunnel in the dark, and St. Peter tells us that they did not know exactly the meaning of their words. But by-and-by they met, and now the Old Testament and the New are seen to dovetail, to fit in and show the presence and power of a Master Hand, none other than the Holy Spirit.

Truth in its progressiveness. Let us be very clear here. The progress of truth from Genesis to Revelation is undoubted. Not every part of Scripture is equally valuable or equally important for us today. If I were called upon to spend my life in a desert island, and to select one or other book, I would much prefer the Epistle to the Romans to the book of Ecclesiastes. I do not think that Ecclesiastes is so important for us today as Romans. But I believe that every book in the Bible has its own place in the progress of divine revelation, though it is not all of equal value or of equal importance. There is such a thing as an inspiration of direct communication. "I have received from the Lord." There is such a thing as an inspiration of selection. The Holy Spirit guided John to select out of our Lord's life what he has given us in the Fourth Gospel. You will also find the inspiration of accurate record. In the Bible you find the words of the devil. They are not true, although they are in the Bible. You will find the words of Job's friends. They are not true, though in the Bible. You will find words of God's enemies in the Bible. They are not true; the sentiment is not true, but the record of them is true. The sentiment is full of imperfection. That is the meaning of inspiration of accurate record. We have got to be very careful therefore. So that if a man feels that next Sunday he will preach from a particular passage, he must look to see who said it. An old Welsh preacher gave out his text in this way: "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." Then he said, "That's a lie!" Of course it was. It is the word of Satan. Although it is in God's Book, it is not true in itself. But the record is true. And so we have to distinguish very carefully in our use of Scripture. I remember once—please forgive another illustration—a man thought it would be very nice to give a lady a ring, as men do sometimes, and on that ring was embossed the word "Mizpah."

She was going a long way, and it seemed so delightful to say, "The Lord watch between me and thee when absent the one from the other." But when afterwards that man read the story of the man that said those words, he saw that he was telling the lady this: "I cannot always be with you. The Lord keep you safe while I am away from you. I cannot trust you out of sight. The Lord must be the witness between us." If that man were giving another ring today he would not give one with "Mizpah" on it. That word, and the corresponding words, were given to one another by two suspicious men; and therefore, although the Christian Endeavourers speak of the Mizpah benediction, they have to do it without any regard to the context. Therefore we must be very careful in the use of Scripture, lest we quote, and in so doing misquote.

All this shows us the need of realising the progressiveness of revelation. Everything was written *for* us, but everything was not written *to* us. "Whatsoever things were written, were written for our learning." But there are parts of Scripture that were not intended for any other than application. There is a wide distinction between primary interpretation and spiritual application. We must, first of all, find out to whom Scripture was written, before we begin to apply it to ourselves. Scripture is perfect in every part. I believe that God's revelation to Abraham was perfect for Abraham, but not necessarily for Isaac. God's revelation to Samuel was perfect for him, but not necessarily for Solomon and the prophets afterwards. There has been continual development and growth of revelation, until you get the meridian in Christ. Since that day it has been meridian, and there has been no sunset, and no twilight, except of our own making. That is what I mean by the substance of Scripture teaching in its reality, in its uniqueness, in its unity, in its progressiveness. That brings me to what is perhaps one of the most difficult parts of our subject.

V. *The difficulties of the Bible.* I can only suggest some general outlines for further consideration. What are we to say about the difficulties of the Bible? People often say, "The Bible is so difficult!" Yes, it is. But when once we have decided on the ground of proper evidence that the Bible is the Word of God, then every difficulty must be judged in the light of that incipient fact. Tregelles, a great textual critic, said, "No difficulty in connection with a proved fact can invalidate the fact itself." For a long time astronomers told us that planets moved on fixed orbits, with unchanging speeds, and according to exact mathematical calculations. There was one part of the heavens that did not seem to yield to that law, but astronomers did not give up because of that difficulty. The whole of their other calculations they still

believed in as true. But when one great astronomer in Cambridge, and another in France, discovered Saturn, the difficulty was solved, and now there is no question whatever about this great principle and that great principle of the planetary system. And so when you and I have come to the conclusion that the Bible is God's Word, we have got to judge all difficulties in the light of that incipient fact.

Some difficulties are inherent in a revelation; otherwise it would not be a revelation. You cannot expect that which comes from God to finite man to be without difficulty. Revelation means *to draw back a veil*, and if there was no veil there to draw back, we should not have any such revelation at all. Therefore we are not surprised, as Butler taught us two hundred years ago, if there are difficulties in revelation, since there are difficulties in nature which come from the same God.

Difficulties are generally scientific, or historical, or ethical. Scientific difficulties, for the most part, turn upon interpretation; not so much a difference between the Bible and science as between men's views of the Bible and men's views of science. They both may be wrong. Difficulties of history have to be tested one by one, and we have yet to find any real statement in the Bible, in terms of history, that has been found to be unhistorical. With regard to morality and ethics, what I have said about progressive revelation applies here also. Because Jael killed Sisera there is no reason why you and I should go and commit murder. Because the Psalmist said, "Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against a stone," there is no reason why we should do likewise. There is such a thing as progress in ethics, but there is no progress as to the ethics of Christ and His apostles. Not a single new ethical thought has ever been given to the world since Jesus Christ and His apostles lived upon this earth. None of these difficulties and discrepancies affect any fundamental Christian doctrine. Dean Farrar, who was no slave of conservatism, once said, "No demonstrable error has ever been discovered in the Bible." You will find that in an article of his on "Inspiration," in Cassell's *Biblical Educator* years ago.

We are not called upon to answer every objection. It is quite sufficient for us to prove the truth of Christianity. Why should a man take leave of his common sense when he looks at the Bible? There are scores of things in life that we cannot understand. Someone says, "I only believe what I can see." You have never seen your own brains, if you have got any. A man says, "I don't believe that that wool on the sheep becomes transformed into an overcoat. I would rather go about cold until I understand how it is, before I buy that overcoat." Not a bit of it; get your over-

coat and keep warm. So with regard to life. Not even the greatest living scientist can tell me what life is. You cannot define life; and if so, do not be surprised if there are difficulties in the Bible that you never will solve. We are not called upon to solve them all.

But meantime, let us make use of the Bible as far as we can, and see how far that will take us. A man went to Mr. Moody once and said, "Mr. Moody, I can't accept that Bible, because there are so many difficulties!" Mr. Moody looked at him with a twinkle of the eyes, and said, "Do you like fish?" "What's that got to do with it?" "Do you ever find any bones in your fish? What do you do with them? Do you eat them?" "No, I put them on the side of the plate." "That's what I do with Bible difficulties. I find quite enough fish to go on with without the bones; and I find quite enough in the Bible without the difficulties." That is a good rule of thumb. It is what is called the verifying faculty, and of great value.

VI. *The criticism of the Bible.* What are we to say about that, that word so frequently found today? Do not be afraid of that word *criticism.* A man was going up a hill in Scotland and in the mist he saw a great figure before him, and was afraid; but when he got up to it he found it was his brother. Things do bulk largely sometimes, and tend to frighten us.

There are three kinds of criticism, and if these three are carefully kept together you need have no fear whatever. The first of these is what is called the Lower Criticism. That is a technical word, descriptive of the criticism which provides us with a text and with a translation. We are dependent upon scholarship for these. We do not know Greek and Hebrew, and we take our Hebrew and Greek text from scholars, and also their translation. That is the Lower Criticism, very legitimate, very important, and of course absolutely essential. We all know that for practical purposes either the Authorised or the Revised Version has given us substantially the true idea of the original text.

There is also what is called the Higher Criticism. This has to do with the authorship, the date, and character of the books; and again it is legitimate, it is necessary, it is vital, it is essential. Only, it requires to be tested. Do not call any man "master" whether he is ancient or modern; just hold yourself free to look at these things for yourself. A young man once said to me, "How is it that so many clever men accept certain views?" I said, "There is a fashion in scholarship as in sex, and no one likes to be out of the fashion either in one or the other." I believe there is a great truth in that. There is a fashion in philosophical thought, in fiction, indeed in literature generally. You must test these things for yourselves, to get a theory that best fits the facts.

There are four things by which to test this Old Testament criticism. First, by the history of the Jewish nation. You will find the history of the Jewish nation in the Old Testament. Test it also by archaeology. You will find that not a single discovery has been made except in confirmation of the Old Testament. Thirdly, examine the books for yourself; and you will find, thirty times over in Leviticus, "The Lord spake unto Moses." I believe it. In Deuteronomy, you will find that it implies, if not Mosaic authorship, at least Mosaic date and substance. Last of all, think of our Lord and His apostles, and remember how much they valued the Old Testament. I think you will find that, with these four tests, it will not be difficult to come to a genuine conclusion about Old Testament criticism. That is the Higher Criticism.

There is another criticism, the Highest Criticism. Here it is. "To this man will I look, even to him that is of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." I now refer to the criticism of the humble soul. You will find that text in Isaiah 66: 2. Also another text: "The Word of God is a critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4: 12). If the soul of man will allow God's Word to criticise it, if we will do a little more of that trembling at God's Word; that will be the Highest Criticism, and it will be the criterion that will settle almost everything for us. But, unfortunately, the trouble is that people take the Lower Criticism, and the Higher Criticism, and they forget the Highest Criticism. Yet, on the other hand, there are humble and earnest souls who know far more than the profoundest scholarship, because they are among the Highest Critics. As James Hamilton said, "The Christian on his knees sees further than the philosopher on his tip-toes." If these three are held together, I have no fear at all about criticism. If you want to appreciate pictures on stained glass you must go inside the church, and not outside. If you want to know what the Bible is, you must get inside, and not judge it from the outside, from the standpoint of reason, but look at it as it is intended to be for mind, and conscience, and heart, and soul, and will. When the whole nature responds like that in the Highest Criticism, the criticism of the Bible can go on till Doomsday without any harm.

VII. *The work of the Bible.* What does the Bible do? We are now coming to more personal matters. We want to see what the Bible does. I can only mention these in passing. The Bible is spoken of as God's seed. Luke 8: 21, "The seed is the Word of God." James 1: 21, We are told to "receive the engrafted Word." 1 Peter 1: 23, We are "born of the Word." 1 Peter 2: 2, We "grow" by the Word. John 15: 3, We are cleansed by the Word.

John 17: 17, We are sanctified by the Word. Ephesians 6: 17, We are protected by the Word, "the sword of the Spirit." Acts 20: 32, We are edified by the Word, "which is able to build you up." Psalm 119: 105, We are illuminated by the Word—"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet." Psalm 19: 7–11, We are equipped by the Word. Psalm 119: 103, We are satisfied by the Word—"How sweet are Thy words unto my mouth!" Surely a Word that can do all this must have power in it. There is a Latin phrase which means, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating." On one occasion a man, speaking at an open-air meeting in London, thought he would like to air a little Latin, and he knew the well-known phrase *experientia docet*. "Experience does it," he translated it; and so it does! The Word of God in the experience is the greatest proof that you and I can have; and if you will allow these things that I have mentioned to become part and parcel of your life, you will know what the power of God really means.

VIII. *The verification of the Bible.* From the work of the Bible upon our own souls will come this verification of the Bible in our efforts on behalf of others. If you want to verify the Bible, go out and win souls for Christ; do personal work. I believe that a great number of our problems, brethren in the ministry, are theoretical. They come from colleges and studies and places where people sit in their carpet slippers and spin theories, remote from human life. Go down into the slums and work for the Lord Jesus Christ, and get men to say, "What must I do to be saved?" Then you will very soon have verification of the Word of God; and when once you have that, you will not need any other testimony to its power. Yes, you will find it by proving it, and you will see what it does.

A sailor had just returned from a whaling voyage, and was taken by a friend to hear an eloquent preacher. When they came out of church the friend said, "Jack, wasn't that a fine sermon?" "Yes, it was ship-shape; the water-lines were graceful, the masts just high enough, the sails looked all right. But I did not see any harpoons. When a vessel goes on a whaling voyage, the object is to get whales. You do not get them because you have a fine ship; you must go after them and harpoon them. A preacher is a whaleman, and he is sent there not to interest or amuse the fish by sailing among them, but to catch them. Jesus said, 'I will make you fishers of men.' Think how many sermons, such as we have just heard, it will take to convict a sinner, and make him cry out, 'What must I do to be saved?'" "Oh," said the friend, "people do not like to be harpooned nowadays. They like to listen to exposition. Surely it is a grand thing to get an audience like that to hear the Gospel?" "Ah, it was to hear *about* the

Gospel. I do not object to the preacher's exposition and illustrations. The trouble was that when he sailed to the fishing-ground and the whales had all carefully come to the surface, instead of manning the boats and striking for a haul, he made a polite bow, and said, 'I'm very glad to see so many whales; but I must not do anything to frighten or hurt them. I hope they will admire my ship, and come again on my next voyage.' Do you think the shipowner would send that man to Behring Strait a second time? I read in the Acts a report of Peter's sermon at Pentecost. He began with an exposition of the Old Testament, and he referred to the prophecies, and the Incarnation, and the Resurrection of Christ, and the outpouring of the Spirit. Then, when he had gained the attention of the crowd, he 'went home' with the words, 'Jesus, whom you crucified.' That's the harpoon!" Yes, and when you use the harpoon you will never have any real doubt about the Bible.

I believe that the great peril today is the separation of the Spirit from the Word. The two are inseparable. The Spirit of truth will guide you into all truth. The Holy Spirit, in the Bible, is not a frame of mind, but a divine power. It is a significant fact today that so few books in Germany, England and Scotland, deal with the revelation of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Bible. It is impossible for a Book that comes from the Holy Spirit to be without the power and illumination of the Spirit. It is impossible for us to have this Book that comes from God without the assurance that God will guide and bless every earnest reader. The reason why there is darkness, and dullness, and a need of spiritual experience and insight, is that we take the Book and forget the Author, or the Spirit of God who gave it. But when these two are together—the Spirit illuminating the Book, and the Book speaking the mind of the Spirit, then the result is absolutely certain for ourselves and for others.

A prayer to Thee, Lord: May I read
Whate'er shall to my Saviour lead;
O may Thy Spirit now impart
A humble, kind, and lowly heart;
Be Thou my Saviour, Thou my Guide,
That what I read may be applied;
My Teacher and my Refuge show,
And let me Thy salvation know.

VI

PERPLEXITIES OF THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE

by the

Rev. J. Stuart Holden, M.A., D.D.

1915

DR. J. STUART HOLDEN

The mellifluous voice and polished oratory of Dr. Stuart Holden are still recalled, as among the great attractions of Keswick in the three decades following his first visit as a speaker in 1902. Greatly gifted, in intellect and powers of expression, he became Chairman of the Convention Council, 1924–30.

After his schooldays at Liverpool College, John Stuart Holden worked in a bank for five years, when some influential friends, recognising his abilities, made it possible for him to go to Cambridge, where he graduated in 1899. He then studied Theology under Handley Moule at Ridley Hall, and was ordained to a curacy at Walcot, Bath. Evangelistic work claimed him, however; and he campaigned in all parts of the country, with Canon W. Hay Aiken, as a mission preacher of the Church Parochial Mission Society. Then in 1905 he was called to the sphere which opened to him his true life-work: the incumbency of St. Paul's, Portman Square, in succession to the Rev. W. H. Griffith Thomas—who had been appointed Principal of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford. Here, Stuart Holden made two notable innovations: Evening Prayer was held on Sunday afternoons, so that an evangelistic service could be held at 7 p.m., and a weekly Bible School was established, which became largely attended by workers in the City and West End of London.

The manifold interests and activities of the indefatigible vicar are indicated by the fact that, in addition to taking a prominent part regularly in the Keswick Convention, and speaking at other conventions, he became Home Director of the China Inland Mission; President of the Missionary School of Medicine; and was one of the founders of the Evangelical Union of South America. He was also in great demand as a "special" preacher in all parts of the country; was the author of several books, and Editor of *The Christian*, 1915–20. He paid several visits to America, where his ministry was greatly appreciated—as is evinced by the fact that Westminster College, Fulton, Mo., conferred its honorary D.D. degree upon him in 1916.

Dr. Holden gave a remarkable address at Keswick in 1914, of almost prophetic quality, entitled, "But if not . . ." which appears in *Keswick's Authentic Voice*. The following year, when Britain was in the throes of war, he delivered a striking series of mid-day addresses which "spoke to the heart" of all present. They were most timely and pertinent; and here they exemplify Keswick's message for such an hour of great need. Allusions to the immediate circumstances impart to the addresses their particular significance and value: and while the addresses are

thereby "dated," they are nevertheless timeless in their demonstration of the relevancy of the Christian Gospel to any hour of personal or national need.

Dr. Holden died in 1934, when only 60, after some years of indifferent health.

I

THE DIVINE MINISTRY OF DARKNESS

It is a mere truism to say that the Convention has never met in circumstances which bear the slightest resemblance to those in which we are gathered today. These are days of cloud and storm; and every one of us, in individual and national life, is so inextricably bound together, and each one of us comes to this place burdened in some degree with our nation's sorrow and apprehension, with our outlook darkened in some degree by all that beclouds the national prospect, our public concerns and our personal experiences so reacting upon one another that it is not too much to say that possibly never before in this tent have gathered so many anxious and apprehensive hearts, so many suffering and sorrowful children of God.

There has been launched upon us in these days a challenge of fresh responsibilities, and there have been imposed upon us the strain and stress of new and strange burdens; and many have come here looking for some clearer light on the situation and on their own lives than is afforded by a consideration of the unquestioned justice of our national cause, by the fluctuations, favourable and otherwise, of the conflict, or by the fact that previous ill has wrought national good. Many of us have come seeking from God in this place some infinitely clearer light than these things afford, and in need of some true and satisfying interpretation of these events, both around us and within us, which have stunned and scared us, and which are straining our resources almost to breaking-point. It is not too much to say that today faith is struggling to maintain its hold in many and many a life. Contradictions between the divine utterances and our present experiences are almost irreconcilable, and the danger in which many of us live today is of the seed of doubt being sown into the soil of a disappointed and despairing heart. We have come hither seeking from God some interpretation of the present. What does God mean by all this? Where does God stand in relation to all this? For where He stands His people, too, must stand with Him and in Him. If we can only see God in the midst of this darkness, we shall lose our anxiety, we shall lose our apprehension, and we

shall be able to sing in a new way and with new courage, "God is working His purpose out."

It is my endeavour, therefore, to bring before you illustrations of some of the unlikely ministries of God; some of the unlikely ways by which God does reveal Himself to His people and work out His purpose in them and around them and through them. I want, as God shall help me, to help some hearts to take their bearings afresh, and to take accurate bearings, that they may steer a right course in these days; that our confidence in God may be re-established, that our courage for the doing of His will may be repaired, and that here and now in this place of holy memory and sacred experience we may renew the covenant with Him and go down from Keswick with a new and Spirit-born and maintained determination to follow the Lamb wheresoever He goeth, even though His ways are often shrouded in mystery to His children.

I want, therefore, to speak to you, first, of the Divine Ministry of Darkness; then, secondly, God willing, I shall hope to speak on the Divine Ministry of Withdrawal; in the following address, on the Divine Ministry of Delay; and as the close of our meditations, on the Divine Ministry of Contradiction.

First, then, I would ask you to turn to a verse in one of the Psalms as a basis of our meditation: "Bless the Lord, O my soul . . . who layeth the beams of His chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds His chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind" (Psalm 104: 1, 3). The God who makes the clouds His chariot—His way of drawing near to His people; and who walketh upon the wings of the wind—the wind whose howling terrifies them, whose threatenings overwhelm and appal them; God who walketh upon the wings of the wind, and always for the blessing, for the illumination, for the guidance of His people.

This whole Psalm is infinitely more than a poetic description of God's greatness as manifested in creation. It is infinitely more than the suggestion it gives of the sacramental significance which abounds in Nature. The meaning of words such as these is mystical, I grant you, but practical; for they give an indication of the character of God deduced from His doings, the character of God which makes Him the ultimate confidence of His people. In these days we all need to be re-established in our confidence in the character of God. Here is our ultimate security as individuals, as the Church of Jesus Christ, and as members of this great nation which God has raised for His glory and the showing forth of His power.

Therefore, in bringing to you a word like this, and speaking to you of this unlikely ministry of God who comes on the black

thunder-cloud, making it His chariot, who walks on the swift wings of the wind, it is that we may understand afresh the reasonableness of our confidence in the character of God, and lose our panic and understand what God is doing in us and around us for His glory. These words afford us a prophetic interpretation of life's experience in every age. It is not the whole truth that God comes in the darkness, but it is a much-needed aspect of the truth today.

We have all had experience in our own lives of God's tenderer, gentler methods. Every one of us knows the green pastures unto which He leads His people, and the ministry of rest which He gives to them beside the still waters. But these are not the ministries by which souls are being nourished today, in the main. These are not the ways in which God is chiefly manifesting His power today. Today it is in the crash of the unexpected storm. Today it is in the thickness of the darkness that His people grope to find Him. Blessed be His name, there are treasures of darkness as there are treasures of light for His people. Blessed be the Name of our God, He who dwells in light into which no man can approach, makes darkness His disguise in these days of sorrow, anxiety, and uncertainty. If we can understand these things afresh today, we shall be saved from disheartenment and despair; we shall be delivered from the conclusion to which some seem to be almost driven, that God has somehow slipped control of things; we shall be saved from any mystification as regards God's power or His goodness; we shall not be asking ourselves questions such as are vexing, assailing some of His people today: Is God good and not powerful, or, is God powerful and not good, that these things which have made the world aghast are allowed to go on unchecked? If we can understand that the very clouds are God's chariots, we shall not lose the value of the things that are not near because we are so surrounded by things which claim our attention.

How wonderfully does this figure of the storm and cloud describe human experience. Life is as a fair landscape, sunlit and beautiful; clouds appear no bigger than a man's hand, then gather with swift suddenness, causing a chill of apprehension to come over us, and ere we are aware of it, the thunder peals, the lightning flash is seen, and the tempest breaks upon us—and life is never the same again for any one of us.

"He maketh the clouds His chariot." I find here a contradiction of the common idea that the darkness which settles down upon the soul is always the result of sin; sometimes it is, as each one of us knows to his bitter regret; not always. There is direction in His Word to those who walk in darkness and see no light while

they are living in obedience to the voice of His Word, that they should rest upon their God and stay them upon His faithfulness. I recollect that Moses was called up into what is described as the thick darkness where God was, not as the result of his sin, and not because of the sin of his people, but there to commune with God and to find a revelation of Him, both for his own soul and for his people, which the light could not have afforded. There is the darkness which is the result of self-knowledge. In these days we have been learning facts about ourselves; we have been learning in our own hearts and lives that there are unsuspected tendencies, that there are undreamed of insincerities, that there are unspeakable disloyalties that we never dreamed existed within us.

When a man begins to realise himself, the dark clouds are apt to gather and settle down upon him. When a man begins to realise that there is a world of difference between his ideals and his tendencies; that there is an eternity of distinction between his views and his resources; when he realises that, again and again, despite consecration, despite prayer and Christian fellowship, he does the thing he never wanted to do, and despite all the assurances of God's Word he fails miserably, inexcusably, the darkness gathers round about him and he cannot see any light. I want to say to any such, that the ultimate solution of the problem of your personality, is God. The perplexing problem of your personality, with its strange, dual nature, with its upward desire and its downward tendency—the ultimate solution of these problems which have enwrapped your life with darkness, is God Himself; and He makes these same clouds His chariot, His way of drawing near to you; and in the hour of self-discovery you may make the supreme discovery of the reality of His power and of unbroken union with His grace.

There are clouds and darkness which settle upon you not because of sin, but because of the insistence of temptation. There are hot, fierce, scorching winds that blow upon men: they know not whence they come, nor why they come; but they leave them in doubt oftentimes of their saving relationship to God. Many and many a one in the dark cries out, Do I belong to Him, or do I not? Have I believed in the past? Have I ever touched God? Have I ever been created by God? That is the darkness in which many a soul is living today—depression because of the long continuance of strain; and I want to say to you again, that the ultimate solution of the ever-present problem of temptation is God, who makes those clouds His chariot. He is nearer to you than He ever was, when the wind is blowing most fiercely and hotly, when every advance is being overborne in your life, and

when you have no strength to call up your moral reserves. God is nearer to you in that hour than you have ever dreamed. The clouds are His chariot; He walks upon the wings of the wind.

Then there is the darkness—and perhaps this is the deepest of all—of life's inexplicable orderings. There are things which seem to conflict with our conception of God. There are calamities, there are catastrophes, there are sudden and unexpected experiences which have come into life, and which all your forethought has not been sufficient to ward off; and life is dark because of them—sorrow, loss, disappointment, injustice, misconception of motive, slander; all things which have made life dark, without a gleam of light; and you have come here not seeking sympathy, for the strong man does not ask for sympathy, but he does ask for explanation. I do not ask God to relieve the burden by one ounce, I do not ask God to relax the strain by one degree; but, O my God, tell me why, give me some explanation of it; let me see the working hypothesis of my own life, that I may co-operate with Thy power and know faith in Thy grace.

I want again to say that the ultimate solution of all these inexplicable things is in this word, God. God is at the heart of every sorrow. God is at the heart of your every need. God is at the heart of every injustice which has made your life dark and battered and broken. Life is little short of tragedy, especially just now, to those who cannot see anything in it but calamity, to those who are unable to discern anything except the denial of their hopes and the confirmation of their blackest fears, to those who cannot understand that God sometimes fulfils Himself by frustrating the very things, the very hopes which we have based upon our misconceptions of His promises. Life is nothing but calamity to those who have allowed seeming fatality to becloud the light of the glory of God's Fatherhood. But if in these days we can come to see not only the chariot, but Him who rides in it; if we can learn to listen in these days not only to the howling of the wind but to the gentle footstep of Him who walks upon the wings of the wind; if we can come to realise that every cloud and storm tell of His nearness, then we shall come to welcome every one of them as affording new and unexpected opportunity of fellowship with Him.

I remember that Jesus our Master took three of His disciples into a mount with Him, and the cloud fell upon them, and they feared as they entered into the darkness. What did they find at the heart of the darkness? A revelation of the Lord exceeding in glory anything they had ever conceived. They came to know their Lord in that mount in which He was transfigured before them against the dark background of cloud, as they had never

known Him on the plain in the days of light and gladness and grace. It has well been said that—

God would not come in the darkness
If He thought you could bear the light;
But you would not cling to the guiding hand
If the way were always bright,
And you would not learn to walk by faith
Could you always walk by sight.

So He comes in the blinding darkness
And the wind of scorching heat:
'Tis the only way, believe me,
To keep us close to His feet;
It is always so easy to wander
When our lives are cool and sweet.

You who have feared to enter into the darkness, God help you to learn today that He is at the heart of the darkness, and that there is something for you there—treasure for your enrichment, enlargement, for the amplification of the usefulness of your life, which you could not get in any other circumstances, however splendid. I might take you to the Word of God, to show you that God's ministry of darkness is no mere fanciful interpretation of our present experience. The whole of God's Word is a record of it. Think of Moses and his dark days; of Joseph and his dark days—it was through darkness that he came to the throne; David and his dark days, the experience of which these very words proclaim to us; Hezekiah and his dark days; Jeremiah and his dark days; Job and his dark days which led him out into the place where God gave him twice as much as he had before; Jesus Himself and His dark days, when there seemed to be no light at all, days which were wrapped in impenetrable gloom, from the cradle until the day He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and yet in all the dark days He had been cradled in the arms of undying love; it was darkness where God was to Christ our Master, even in its thickest gloom in the shadows of the Garden. Think of the early Church in its dark days; you find a record of them almost on the first page of its history: the clouds which gathered around them, the winds which blew and scattered them, but only scattered them for the multiplication of service—scattered them as the good seed of the Kingdom for the fulfilment of God's own purpose, to make His Word known unto the furthermost bound of man's existence. I read at the last in the record of the redeemed in the glory, that "these are they which came"—out of dark days, which came out of wind-swept lives, "out of great

tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." These things are written for the encouragement of our faith, to make us steadfast, to help us keep a hard helm when the winds are blowing in a contrary direction to that in which we think they should blow. God is at the heart of them all.

Who would have thought in this our own day that this earth-born war cloud would become God's chariot; who would have thought that the permissive will of God should be behind all the machinations of evil, misguided men, which have brought upon the world this baptism of blood? Yet that it has been so is attested all round about us. It is attested in the nation, in the arrest of many a thoughtless life, and the turning of many a prayerless life to God in prayer. It is attested in many a Christian home, for the wind and darkness have succeeded in banishing trifling worldliness and things of destructive import as kindlier days have never done. We may hence believe for ourselves that through this darkness which enshrouds us—what in measure is God's way of drawing near to us to bless—if He can do it in the nation, quickening faith, reviving hope, purifying national life, as we pray may yet be done in far greater measure than we have realised, in these our individual lives, He works to the same end. The clouds may blot out the sunlight, but they help to keep the pastures green. If it were all sunlight it would mean that everything would be scorched or burnt. There is fructifying power in the rain, which dry days do not bring to any life. The wind may strip the leaves from the trees, and destroy the blossom; but it is the wind which causes the trees to throw their roots deeper down into the soil until they grip the rock beneath. The thunder-storm may cause great damage round about us, to our possessions and those things which have become germane to our lives; but do not forget that it is the thunder-storm which purifies the air of all sultriness and destroys the germs of much disease; and it is the wind of God which drives from our lives much that is poisonous, much that is destructive of our true good, and of His highest glory.

This is the ministry of the dark days. This is the ministry of sorrow. On the loom of the storm and the cloud, garments of holiness are woven, to be worn by the people of God. Let me say this: It is by these experiences of darkness in which we cannot see His face, but can hold His hand and feel its presence; it is in days when we cannot stand against the gale save as we are supported by the sense of His own nearness - it is in these days that our lives are disciplined, our spirits are chastened, and our hold upon the things of eternal worth is tightened. The storm leaves us with a fellowship with all who suffer, and a sympathy which other

experiences could never bring to us. The fact that you and I have been in the dark, and have had there to wait for the dawning of the light from God, will make us very generous and humble with those who are suffering, and are perplexed, and are taking courses which do not always commend themselves to our judgment. After the storm has passed, and after the darkness has been for ever dispelled, we shall find as we have been enabled to hold fast to our confidence in the Fatherly love and care of our God, that the wind has blown where it listed, and we have heard the sound thereof, and we have been born of the Spirit into a new world in which all things are new, for we are new; in which all pride and prejudice have been displaced by those qualities which in Jesus Christ constitute the winsomeness which draws men of all ages to Him, and we become more than ever His people, more than ever His representatives, more than ever those through whose lives He can bless other lives.

So do not fear the darkness of these days; do not tremble at the howling of the storm. The clouds are His chariot. He can come nearer to you in the darkness than you have ever let Him come to you in the light. He comes closer to you today in your unconsciousness of Him than He has ever been. The wind brings Him closer to you than you have ever known Him. Do not, therefore, cast away your confidence. Do you ask yourself again and again until your own questions perplex and puzzle you, "Am I in the path of God's will, or am I not? Have these things come upon me as a punishment? Can they be identified with God's goodness at all?" Yes, His love must sometimes take unkindly forms in order to bless His loved ones.

Is this the right road home, O Lord?
The clouds are dark and chill;
This stony path is hard to tread,
Each step brings some fresh hill.
I thought the way would brighter grow,
And that the sun with warmth would glow,
And joyous songs from glad hearts flow:
Is this the right road home?

Yes, child, this very road I trod,
The clouds were dark for me;
The stony path was sharp and hard,
Not sight, but faith, could see
That at the end the sun shone bright
For ever where there is no night,
Where glad hearts rest from earth's fierce fight:
It is the right road home.

It is the right road home—through clouds, darkness, storm and stress.

Therefore, in closing, let me say this: Do not lose heart in these days because of these things. God does not always rebuke the storm; but He does always reassure the storm-tossed believer. God does not always say, "Peace, be still," but He does always say "Trust me." God does not always let us see the end of the way, but He will give us light enough to take the next step in faith, in obedience, in surrender, in submission and loyalty, as we trust Him. And one day when the mists have rolled away, and the darkness has been dissipated, and the storm has spent itself, we shall find ourselves with Christ on the sunlit hills of Emmanuel's land, and we shall know that this was the right road home, and we shall sing with all the redeemed: "He hath done all things well." May God give to us all this confidence, for His Name's sake.

II

THE DIVINE MINISTRY OF WITHDRAWAL

The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord—JOB 1 : 21.

I WANT to speak to you now on the ministry of God's subtraction from the lives of His people. I want that we shall see that sometimes God enriches the souls of His people by seemingly impoverishing them; that sometimes God enlarges our powers by apparently restricting our liberties and our opportunities.

I want to take as the foundation of our thought, the words of Job: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord." We are all much readier to acknowledge God in the things that He gives, than in the things which He takes away from us. It is always much easier to recognise love when its gifts enrich us and add to our happiness and our peace, than when its withdrawals bring the cloud of sadness and anxiety of sorrow, discomfort, and restriction into our lives. The secret of abiding and abounding hope and blessing is in the recognition that the same hand from which we receive the gifts is the hand which withdraws them also: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away."

These words are not a mere expression of stoical indifference; they are really an interpretation of this seeming calamity—and an interpretation, mark you, which this child of God was ready with. It was an interpretation which seemed to be entirely spontaneous. Immediately upon receipt of the staggering news, this man had the interpretation of the seeming unkindly providence at hand: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." This, at least, is testimony to the fact that he had lived in the secret of God's presence, that the secret of God's will had been disclosed to him, as well as that on the instant when his hopes were frustrated, when his whole world tumbled about him, he was ready with a satisfying interpretation to his own heart, and clear and indubitable witness to those who brought him the evil tidings. It is a great thing for a man to realise when he seems to be overwhelmed, that he is really overshadowed. It is a great thing

to know that the Lord sometimes for His own purpose takes away His own gifts, and to realise that this is often the pathway to the soul's greatest triumph.

I need not remind you of more than the outline of the story of Job. It is a story which always makes strong appeal to suffering men, because it is a mirror of life as they find it. I do not know how it is with you, but I think I have read more of Job since the war broke out than I ever did before. There are some times in life when the Bible seems to open there and refuses to open anywhere else. There are some times in life when this portion of God's Word seems to yield more richly and appropriately than at any other time; and I think we are living in such a time today.

You remember well this story. A good man at ease, enjoying unclouded prosperity, to whom there comes tidings of the sudden loss, first of fortune, then of family, and subsequently the experience of the loss of health. Everything which had made life bright, everything which had made him what he was, taken away at a stroke. He had a wife who was void of spiritual understanding, and a company of meddlesome friends who could not understand that a man of professed goodness could be brought into such a state as that in which they found him. Their verdict was that his suffering was the consequence of his sin; that, hidden beneath the mask of his piety, was some unchecked moral disorder with which God was now proceeding to deal. The reasoning seems specious, but as you read the full record you find that his sufferings had nothing to do with sin. This was not punishing of sin so much as the perfecting of righteousness in this man. This was not God's punitive dealing at all, but God's disciplinary dealing with Job. As you read the record you find that his burdens became heavier, his perplexities became greater, his darkness became thicker, his loneliness became more terrifying, the sympathetic understanding which often helps men in such circumstances became yet rarer to Job; but in the end you realise that you have been reading the story of a triumphant soul, the story of a man who in these things had been prepared by God for infinitely greater prosperity than hitherto he has ever known; the story of a man whose true interests have been advanced by his losses, whose life has been enriched by its limitations, and whose spirit has been made more fruitful by the prunings to which his life has been subjected. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away."

First of all, the faith of this man who can utter this word spontaneously, without premeditation, as it would seem, his faith is that God is the Author of these mystifying losses, just because God never contradicts Himself. In the dim past of his experience, Job had come to know God and had had a supreme disclosure of

God's will, and to that vision he clung in the darkness; of that assurance from God he laid fast hold in the days when everything seemed to contradict it. Just because God is the Author of these things, just because God cannot contradict Himself, he realises there is a sanctifying blessing linked up with these subtractions and withdrawals of God's gift; and that is why he can declare, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord."

The conviction grows upon one every day that God never intended any one of us to be equal to the strain of life apart from the divine reinforcement of His grace. We were never intended to be equal with life. We were never meant to be able to face life without God. That is the lesson that God is impressing upon His people at this time. Would to God we might learn it individually and as a nation. Job is able to sing, to the wonderment of those who heard him and who saw his state, "Blessed be the Name of the Lord" because he realised those reinforcements of God's own nature in the hour when he most needed Him.

I bring you this word today because I am very conscious that there are those in this gathering whose hearts are crushed, there are those here from whose lives there has gone all the brightness. Loved ones have been taken; the children of many prayers have been shot down on the fields of France; possessions have dwindled. At one time it seemed that God had made our isle so strong that we could not be moved; yet today there sits a poor man where once there sat a rich man. There are some of us here today who have lost precious opportunity for the exercise of influence in God's service. There are some who have lost health, some who have lost mental vigour and alertness. All around us are hearts crying out, "My God, why?" I want to help such to realise that all of our seeming losses, if our lives are truly Christ's, are really gains. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away."

There is no alternative solution to some of those apparently inexplicable things in life; you may consider second causes if you like, but I have yet to find that the consideration of second nature affords any comfort, brings any peace, any lasting satisfaction. The only solution to this problem, alike with those we previously touched upon, is God Himself. Let me put it as crudely as I can. If our losses, our subtractions, our anxieties and sorrows, are without any moral and spiritual meaning, then God's love is a mere myth. If these things have got no spiritual and moral import in life, then I have believed in the love of God in vain. But if it is true that the Lord sometimes takes away things, then this is the pathway to blessing unspeakable. May God help us to find it today.

I look round about, and I find that this word of Job is borne out by every observation of God's ways in the world. For instance, every harvest has behind it the story of loss. I look upon the orchard in its spring beauty, the fair blossom and the tender green leaf, and then that is taken away. Why? That the harvest of fruit may be reaped. I look at the achievement of men in every sphere of life and on every level, and if I am allowed to see the underside of their worthy achievement I see that it is a record of sacrifice, it is a record of loss. If I rightly observe the lives of those with whom I come closest into contact, I see that every gleam of holiness—and, perhaps, I see some little reflection of this in my own life, too—that every gleam of holiness which appears in the darkness of life, is not only the product of things which God has given, but things which God has graciously taken away. I do not think I strain the meaning of application of this word when I say that in God's greatest gift of all, in God's greatest work of all, the work of redemption, I see this process, for the Lord gave His Son, and the Lord took Him away, and the taking away of the Son of God has been an eternal blessing to the world. We had not been here gathered at His feet had the Lord not taken away the great gift He gave in human form to men. "Blessed be the Name of the Lord."

It is impossible to pass by in these circumstances the application of a word like this to the great affairs which perplex and trouble us all in our nation. Surely the Lord gave to our nation long peace, wonderful opportunity and power of expansion and influence; it was the Lord who gave to our land an honourable supremacy among the nations of the earth; it was the Lord who gave to us that sense of security in which you and I have always lived, and that consciousness of firm, strong establishment; and the Lord hath taken it away. The Lord hath taken it away, probably never to give it back in just the same way; for, believe me, behind and above all the machinations of evil which have resulted in this terrible strife is the permissive will of God. If I did not believe that, I had no word to say to you. If I did not believe that, I should be floundering in a black sea of doubt. Above the noise of the strife I think I hear God saying to our nation: "As many as I love I rebuke, I chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent."

Sometimes God withdraws His gifts from nations as from men, because they have been misused and perverted, and their return is withheld until that nation or until that man can say, "Blessed be the Name of the Lord." Loving my land as I do with a lover's passion, I am yet bold to say that there are perverted gifts of God that He simply had to take away from this nation in order to

bring us back to Himself. We see on every hand matters of entirely secular concern preferred to those of moral urgency. We have seen in recent days religious controversies multiplied, while true religion has been declining in our land. We have seen luxury running to extravagance and foolishness; we have seen the lust of pleasure and sport and frivolity increase until God's own holy day has been invaded without public excuse. We have seen the sanctions of God's Holy Word entirely disregarded and dealt with in contumacy by man's selfishness and self-will. I say God must take away some of these gifts with which He has so long blessed us, in order that the nation may be brought back to itself and then back to His feet in penitence and prayer. I believe that by God's goodness, and if the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is still delayed, there will yet be a day of true and abiding and new greatness for this land as God's national witness, but it will not be as the outcome of our military strength, or our strategic competence or our naval vigilance. It will not come by reason of any of these things, not by the triumph of armed force over armed force, or diplomacy over diplomacy; it will come in one way alone, as the result of the things our Lord has taken away from us. It will come by national repentance and humiliation and confession of sin. It will come, and only come, when this nation is back at God's feet, recognising that He gave, that He has taken away, and saying with a new confession of faith, "Blessed be the Name of the Lord." May God hasten it in His time.

I do not want to speak only in this general, impersonal way, but to personal and individual cases to whom these words are specially applicable. I do not know if this message is for more than one or two, but I pray God to bless it to such ones. I read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as interpretation of the altered condition of things in the Hebrew nation, by God's ordering, that "He taketh away the first that He may establish the second." It is for the establishment of the second and the better that He has taken away things out of your life that seemed to be part of your very life. The character-product of God's processes is always their justification. These seeming unkindly methods of God are justified by the character-product in the lives of His people. It is only by our tears that our eyes can often be cleansed from the sin-dust which mars their vision. It is only by our sorrows, it is only by sorrows experienced, that our intuitions and sympathies are quickened until we ourselves become in some degree representatives of our Lord in all His sympathy and insight with human need.

I remember, years ago, being asked to go to visit a poor woman who was in trouble. She had lost her only child. I went to her

house and tried to comfort her with words of the Lord, but I saw that I was making very little impression upon her. She did not seem to be in a state in which she could receive mere verbal comfort of this kind, and I, poor soul, could not give her the sympathy for which her heart craved, for I had never suffered as she suffered. As I was going, realising the fruitlessness of my mission, I said, "Is there anything I can do for you?" She gave me the name of a woman two or three streets off, and said, "If you could fetch Mrs. So-and-so, she lost her baby a month ago; she would understand."

It is only our sorrows that quicken our sympathies until we can touch broken hearts without making them wince; until we can stand where others stand, and weep with them that weep, and unselfishly rejoice with those that rejoice. The setting sun in our lives, as in nature, brings the starry heavens within range of our vision. We are better men and better women, we see further into the heart of things and into the plans of God, when He has taken away some of the brightness which has hitherto encircled and illumined our lives. Our anxieties and impoverishments deepen our dependence upon God. The loneliness of our spirits develops in us a sense of the utter necessity of cultivating companionship with the Lord. The crushing of our proud aims makes us truly humble, and the consciousness of God's hand upon us invests life with a saving, sanctifying awe. That is what we need in these days, surely. Let me say again, the character-product of God's processes is the justification of them. He takes away the first that He may establish the second.

I want to say another thing. Since it is the Lord who takes away these things, we may with confidence believe that all our buried hopes and joys will one day rise again; because it is God's hand that effects these subtractions, we may believe that they have an eternal bearing upon our lives, and that our hopes and joys, and friendships of human life, are buried in order that one day they may rise again. Every fair gift that He has withdrawn will one day bloom again for the blessing of our lives. When God takes away His gifts He does not revoke them. When God withdraws these gifts from us, He does not rescind any of His promises. Blessed be His name who has made us, not children of time, but of eternity; and what He doeth it shall be for ever.

I have a recollection of a visit once paid to a home where there were little children, one of whom had just had a birthday—a little boy of five; and he was tremendously proud of the fact that a present had been made to him of a watch. He could not tell the time, so could not make use of the watch. The watch was brought out that I might see and admire it; and I said, "But you

cannot use this watch." "No," said the boy, "but mother is going to take care of it for me until I grow up." God sometimes takes our precious gifts from us until such time as we can appreciate them, until such time as we are fitted for their right and fruitful use. The Lord gave; and when He so takes away, blessed be the Name of the Lord.

Meanwhile, if this be so, when our treasures are lifted up, surely our hearts are lifted up, too; where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also; until we find ourselves increasingly detached from everything else in life but this one longing purpose, that Thy will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven. You have all heard the story which Professor George Adam Smith tells, of how, when in Palestine, he saw a shepherd carrying a little lamb, and he asked why the lamb was being so carried; had it a broken leg, or was it tired, or was there any other cause why the shepherd was so shelteringly carrying it? The shepherd said it was nothing of that kind at all. He pointed to an old sheep that was gravely trotting along by his side, and said, "That is the mother, and she is a strange sheep; she wanders, and the only way I can keep her in the flock is by taking the lamb and carrying it." That is why God takes away loved ones sometimes. It is the only way at His disposal to keep us close to His feet; it is the only way our hearts can ever be weaned from earth to have treasure laid up in heaven even without our co-operation. That may be for someone here some slight interpretation of God's dealing with them.

Let me say one thing ere I close. Whatever else may be true of heaven, it is certain that there every lost cause, every unfinished service, every incomplete happiness will find a new opportunity. Every gift which we have now only partially appreciated, will be renewed. Every capacity of yours and mine which is now inadequate to our ideals, will be expanded. Every light of love that has been lighted here only to be extinguished, will be rekindled in the Saviour's presence. That is the meaning of this wonderful word that "the Lord taketh away." I do not think this song ever sounds sweeter in the Lord's ears, and I do not think it is ever as forceful in its witness to the world, as when it rises courageously out of the silence of a crushed and stricken heart, as when it is sung by quivering lips with breaking voice, as when the light of glad surrender to Him shines through tear-dimmed eyes. God help us to sing it in these days. It is the music of the Gospel which will lead weary earth-bound souls to Christ. The light of His love, the reality of His grace, and these translated into testimony in your stricken, crushed lives, will be the greatest force for the blessing of this world that has ever been exerted by divine grace through your life.

So today let us humble and bow ourselves before Him in reverent and glad certainty that what He does is right; that God does not contradict Himself; that His ministry of withdrawal is part of the process of grace to which I submitted myself at the first; that in this way God is doing what He could do in no other way for my life, for His glory, and for the world in which He has set me as His witness. And one day, when He comes or we go to Him, we shall join in the song of those who are able to look back on the past, as we cannot today, who will be able to see from the heights of Immanuel's land every turn and twist of the road, and how every experience was part of a definite and perfect plan; and in that day we shall sing anew this song, with a new meaning, with the interpretation of full and unclouded knowledge. This shall be at last part of the song of the glory. "The Lord gave, and the Lord took away; blessed be the Name of the Lord," for so He brought me here.

III

THE DIVINE MINISTRY OF DELAY

We have been endeavouring, in the preceding addresses, to shed some light on those experiences of the Christian life which are often mystifying and perplexing, which very often exercise an influence of depression in the lives of God's people, and make them to wonder what God is doing in them and for them, and just where they are in regard to relationship with Him and with His will. We have endeavoured to see that often there comes into life an experience of darkness which is God's opportunity for drawing closer to the soul than at any other time, and that there are treasures in darkness for the enrichment of the life of His people which good days might never furnish.

We have spoken together on God's ministry of withdrawal—how that often He takes away from us the gifts which He formerly bestowed upon us, not to irritate our lives, but rather to irrigate them with streams of fresh, living blessing; that God's withdrawals are all directed to the extension, the enlargement, the increase of our true being; that God's love is the inspiring cause of every experience by which alone we can be taught the truth regarding ourselves and regarding Him. We ought to see, and to impress one upon the other, that God takes the kindliest way with each one of us, that is, the kindliest way consistent with the working out of His purposes of grace in and through us. He does not willingly afflict His children. "He knows our frame, and remembers that we are dust." If an earthly parent pities, and sympathises with, and allows for the weaknesses of his children, much more does our God; and if in these days we can come into a new realisation of the certitudes of God's love, and the faithfulness of God, which is in such entire contradiction to our poor, feeble fitfulness, we shall go back to lives with a new interpretation of them. The darkness will be seen to be round about Him, and the clouds will be recognised as His chariots, and our loss will be recognised as part of His fructifying influence on our lives. He prunes us that we may bring forth more fruit, and we shall learn to sing, "Blessed be the name of the Lord!"

One of the great dangers of life is that we lose sight of that

great design of God in the small details by which that great design is worked out; and it has been well said that we entirely lose the value of any experience if we isolate it. That is, if you take your sorrow and regard it apart from the great designing love of God; if you take your losses, if you take your temporary setbacks, if you take your momentary depressions, and dwell upon these things as if they were the only experiences of God's providence, and as if they were not related to the great central control of His love, you will entirely miss their value. It is that we might be saved from that, that we are meditating together thus on some of God's unlikely but never unkindly ministries.

With this brief recapitulation let me ask you to turn to the word which is the occasion of our thought as we go on to consider the divine ministry of delay by which God oftentimes tests His people. Let us read in the book of Lamentations, chapter 3, from verse 24, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him. The Lord is good to them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." It is especially on those last words that I want our meditation to be based.

Let us frankly admit that one of the great difficulties of life with many of us is concerned with this fact: that God sometimes seems to delay His answers to our prayers. The source of the problem with many a Christian life is just this: That God apparently does not answer, and apparently does not even heed, much of our crying. By His grace our faith in Him has not been finally disturbed. By His grace this conflict has been carried on courageously in secret, and no one outside our own heart even suspects that there is such a conflict. But you know that there is, and I know that there is; and sometimes the only word that comes from our hearts, as we come into God's presence, is almost the last word which came from our Saviour's lips: "My God, why?" This is not the first question of the Christian life. Faith's first question is usually "How?" and there is a stage in Christian experience when we are constantly saying "How?"—"How can a man be born when he is old?" "How can these things be?" "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" These are the first questions of the Christian life. But methinks, as we go on with God, and life deepens, and its necessities become heavier, and its sorrows more acute, and our perceptions also become more acute, the question which rises from the heart of many a disturbed and distressed believer is: "My God," not "how?" but "why?" I think that I have already said that many of us are seeking at this time not comfort, not sympathy, not even the lightening of our

loads; but we are seeking explanation, interpretation from God Himself as to what He is doing in these our lives. I say, let us frankly admit to ourselves and before Him today, that this is the secret battleground of our life. Many of us are perplexed and puzzled, some perhaps distressed almost to the point of doubt, of desertion—desertion of their own allegiance, desertion of His colours—because He seems to delay, or almost, possibly, to deny the things we ask Him.

Yet, I recollect that there is nothing which the Word of God so amply encourages men to do, as to pray. There are promises attached to prayer which do not attach to any other condition laid down in God's Word. There are riches which are given to men, according to God's Word, as the result of prayer and waiting upon Him, which they can obtain in no other way. It is just because the promises with regard to prayer are so great, and ample, and high, and wide, that these delays of God perplex us, and we cry out, "My God, why?" There are times in life when nothing but sheer belief in God's greatness will save me from despair; there are times when absolutely nothing but simple reliance upon God's love, without any present evidence of it, will save us from hopelessness; there are times when literally nothing but almost reckless faith in His omnipotence, wisdom, and love, will prevent us from sinking into positive moral apathy and spiritual lethargy. Therefore it is my present endeavour, as God shall help me, to help some here to a re-creation, a re-acquisition of that sheer belief and that simple reliance and that reckless faith in God which trusts Him even when His face is veiled, and even when they do not feel the grip of His hand. Faber well said—

> Thrice blest is he to whom is given
> The instinct that can tell
> That God is on the field, when He
> Is most invisible.

That is the instinct which may God grant every one of us to have in these days.

These words from which I speak to you were uttered by the prophet Jeremiah at a day when the nation's desire, its best desire, was perhaps never so evident. The nation had begun to see the fulfilment of God's promises and the working of His providence. Their foes were being pushed from their land, the beginnings of re-cultivation were taking place, the broken-down altars of God were being re-built, but so slowly that the nation could not reconcile the slowness of God with the implicit assurances upon which their faith in Him was built. They were impatient and restive under God's apparent inactivity. Faith saw

God's beginnings and, like the disciples of later days, "thought the kingdom must immediately appear." There is a great deal to be said for the faith of a little child which cannot understand the reason of delay. There is a great deal to be said for the unquestioning faith of a little child which asks "Why?" because delay seems to conflict with present good. But you will not misunderstand me when I say there is a great deal more to be said for the faith of a grown man who has come to know that God has an entirely different scale for the measurement of time than that scale which we commonly use. There is still more to be said for the faith of the man who is perfectly content to rest in the fact that a thousand years are as one day with Him, and one day as a thousand years. This was the faith of Jeremiah. He had looked into the depths of the Infinite God, and had seen that God was unhurried, and that God's ways were the more certain because they were not the more obvious; and he waited calmly and sought to re-create courage and patience and hope in his people, just because these things were the expression of his own soul. Hence he says, "It is good for men that they are kept waiting, that they have quietly to hope for the salvation of God."

You will readily understand that these words of his are of infinitely wider application than to Israel in that day. I believe they are apposite to the case of every one of us here today who is perplexed because (shall I say?) the expected deliverance from sin in his own life does not come as he thought it would. The petition that he offers for some good of which he conceives himself to be in great need, is not granted. The loved one that he prays for is not immediately converted, and he goes on praying and praying, and he has almost lost heart about it. The revival of his work, for which he conscientiously wrought to the very last ounce of his strength, does not seem to be even on the horizon. We have got to learn *why*; and we have got to learn from the delays of God what are the moral purposes, what is the spiritual good of having quietly to wait and hope.

I am quite conscious that when the last word of human experience about prayer has been said, we are still in the presence of the greatest mystery of all. The man who thinks he knows all about prayer, and can frame a philosophy of prayer, really confesses that he knows nothing about the greatest mystery of all. How prayer liberates spiritual forces, who knows? Why God has ordained that men should wait upon Him and unite their wills with His will in order to exert the saving power of His grace both in their life and, through them, in the lives of others—who can say? With regard to this greatest of all subjects, there is nothing more to be said than that which Paul said about the knowledge of God: "We know in part, and we prophesy in part." But thank God, we

do know. What we know we know with a certainty which nothing can shake; but we only know in part. Therefore it is more suggestions that I can offer you today, suggestions which have come with some degree of light and encouragement of my own heart, in regard to this greatest of all mysteries—that it is good for a man to wait and hope for the salvation of God.

It is almost unnecessary to say that there is no thought in this word, or in any other, of any man having to wait until God is willing to bestow upon him the primary gifts of pardon and peace and forgiveness, and salvation which is the free gift of Jesus Christ. Blessed be His name for the experience each of us has, that the moment the sinner calls upon Him, the moment the leper cries to Him, the moment the dying soul turns his gaze upon Him—that moment the Lord saves him, that moment the blood cleanses him, that moment his adoption into the family of God is assured. In this respect it is never God who keeps men waiting, but men who keep God waiting. Therefore it is not in this respect at all that the discipline of God's delay is to be interpreted. But, in regard to that aspect of His mercy which is concerned with the strain of our present discipline, with the anxiety of future uncertainty, with the relief of immediate discomfort, with the weariness of unremoved burdens—it is in that realm of life that we want to know why God delays: and it is not unnatural that we should be impatient.

For instance, here is a good man. He reads that "All things work together for good to them that love God," and he sees nothing in his life today but chaos. There is the business man, and the bottom has been knocked out of his business. There is the home which has been invaded by sorrow and uncertainty and anxiety, until the nerves of everyone in the home are on edge, and no one knows what an hour is going to bring forth of fresh calamity. That man is comforted with that assurance of God that "all things work together for good," and he cannot see them working together at all. He says, "What does this mean? I have claimed that promise again and again and again, and this is the result!" There is a young man yonder, and there has been illumined to his soul's vision this word, "In all things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us," and he has been defeated since he came to Keswick, and this morning his face is toward the ground, and not toward the Lord. He says, "What does this mean? I have rested my whole weight, as I have believed, upon this promise of God, and my Lord delays His coming in power to me. What does it mean?" There is the busy worker—I have met him since I came to Keswick, and I have met her—who has come from some far-off missionary field, in which for the last ten years he has been pouring out his life, seeking to live in accord with the dictates of the king-

dom of God and of Christ his King, resting upon that word—"My word shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish that which I please," and he confesses today that he has seen it accomplish hardly anything. What does it mean? There is the great promise upon which every member of Christ's Church just now is building more solidly than ever a temple of hope: "Behold, I come quickly," and it seems as though Christ was never so much needed as He is now today, it seems as though international fellowship can never again be restored as we have known it, it seems as though the scattering units of Christ's Church can never be gathered together again in one, save by His coming, and the Church of Jesus Christ cries out "Amen. Come quickly, Lord Jesus"—and there is not a sign of His coming. What do these delays of God mean?

I am going to suggest three things, and they are mere suggestions; but may they bring light to you, as to me in past days. The first thing I want to say about God's delays is this: It is only by enforced waiting upon Him that we come to know God with that knowledge which is the foundation of all character. I use the word *enforced waiting upon God*, because it is only by our being forced to wait upon God that some of us ever do wait on Him. We are naturally impatient, we are naturally impulsive, we naturally chafe at anything like slowness; and God, by the withholding of the answer for which we have looked, keeps us at His feet in order that we may come to know Him. God is infinitely more concerned in the making and re-making of our lives than in the gratifying of our minds; God is infinitely more concerned to make us men and women of His own pattern, infinitely more concerned to deepen His life in our souls, infinitely more concerned to make us good men and good women, than to gratify some of those desires which we often express in unconsidered prayer. For we cannot come to know God, and inferentially we cannot come to know ourselves, in an hour. God's delays do not indicate any caprice on God's part, but rather God's concern and God's compassion for us. They are directed toward saving us from hurrying from His presence before the lessons of His grace have been more than mentally accepted by us. God is preparing us, by keeping us waiting upon Him, worthily to receive, and to interpret, and then use the gifts He will give in answer to prayer and in consonance with His word.

You have seen tourists—I see them constantly. They come to London; they rush about here and there to see the outside of building, greenery, and park, and then they go back to their homes, and think they know London. But do they? One of Ruskin's students once said to him, after returning from his first Italian visit, "Sir, immediately I entered the Gallery at Florence,

I knew in a moment what you had always impressed upon us as the supremacy of Botticelli." Ruskin's reply was somewhat cutting. He said, "Oh, you found that out in a moment? It took me twenty-two years to discover it." Notwithstanding, there are a great many people who think they know God in the light of a single experience. We are kept waiting upon Him that we may become of the number of those who know their God, and who consequently are empowered to do exploits. God is *making* us; do not let us be impatient under the process. God is *making* us; do not let impatience and impetuosity take you from under the hand of the Master Workman. He is illuminating the flaws, and re-making the marred vessels. The two qualities which we need most—endurance and radiance—are not imparted to any man in a single hour, and therefore God keeps us waiting that in His presence, beholding only as in a mirror, and not yet face to face, His glory, we may be changed into the same image from glory unto glory.

The second thing I want to say is this. Very many of our prayers must be passed through the refining medium of God's wisdom, that is, of God's love; many of our prayers must be edited by God. Well-intentioned prayer is not always well-informed prayer. Our intention in asking may be all that it should be, and yet, like as to those who made requests of the Saviour, God often has to say to His children, "Ye know not what ye ask."

If some of our prayers were immediately answered, the consequence would be almost immediate moral and spiritual disaster. Our prayers have to be passed, I say, through the refining medium of God's wisdom, sometimes with regard to their motive. "Ye have not, because ye ask amiss." There are men and women who pray for power, but their real objective is pre-eminence. What they really mean by power is that which is going to make them eminent, pre-eminent. There are some of us who pray for gifts, simply because we think it will make it easier to do the work, the duty, which lies at our hands. There are some of us who pray, and our motives are altogether unworthy of the words we express; and we have to be kept waiting until God turns in upon our life the searchlight of His love, and we know the untrustworthiness of our own impulse, and we yield us to that gracious Spirit who makes intercession in us according to the will of God.

Not only in regard to *motive*, but in regard to *ignorance* of the real content of our prayers, Christ has to say to His disciples again and again, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of; are ye able to be baptised with the baptism wherewith I am baptised?" We know not what we ask oftentimes, and hence God's delay. The

granting immediately of everything we ask would spoil us, would morally ruin us. I have seen children—I suppose we have all seen them—who have been utterly spoiled by the weak good-nature of parents who gave them at once everything they wanted. Surely the way to spoil a child morally, surely the way to do a child a wrong, is to give that child everything he asks for immediately. We have to learn that God's "No" is just as much an answer as God's "Yes"; we have got to know and learn that God's "Not yet" is just as truly an expression of divine love as God's "immediately." The day will come to every one of us when we shall know that God's silence was in reality His most loving speech to us.

Well do I recollect, some years ago, in the city of Dublin, a man coming into the vestry-room of the church and saying, "Sir, I want to thank you for that message about God's love. I believe every word of it now, but I did not six months ago." His eyes filled with tears, which rolled down his cheeks. I said, "What does it mean, my brother?" He said, "Six months ago my home was bright and happy, and I prayed God to save my wife and our infant. He did not do it; He took them, and I have come to know that He took them only in order to bring me back to Himself, from whom I had wandered." God's silence in that man's life was His richest and most loving speech. And some of us have found that; and more of us will find it ere these dark days in which we live have passed away. The things we try to get rid of in prayer, the things we try to roll off upon the Lord, are sometimes the very things we can least afford to lose. Some of those things we call burdens, that we try to get rid of in the sanctuary, are the things that God has placed upon us for the steadying of our life and the guiding of our energies into channels which otherwise we should overlook and miss. Paul learnt that there was something infinitely better than the removal of the thorn-pain—infinitely better! Thrice he besought the Lord to remove it—with what interval between those prayers we know not. But surely Paul, like the rest of us, was perplexed at God's delay, but only to find out that God was preparing something infinitely better than the extraction of the thing which was causing a confessed wound. "My grace is sufficient for thee." If he never had a thorn-pain, like the nightingale which sings sweetest when its breast is pierced, he had never learned to sing the song, "Most gladly will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." We learn, you and I, that the cord which we would have had God cut, He disentangles, and so saves the length of life's cord. God's ways are always justified of His children, if they will wait on Him.

Ere I pass on to the third and last thing about this, I would like to say that surely we get an illustration of all this today in the burden of prayer which is increasingly descending upon us all for our nation. There are not a few of us who are possibly perplexed that God has not already intervened to stay this terrible conflict. We look out from this place and we see across the Channel the sons of God being butchered upon the fields of France and Belgium; and we cry to God to give victory to the cause which is inherently right, and about which we have no shame. He does not do it. It is twelve months next week since the battle lines were first spread, and they are practically drawn in the same place as they were then, and thousands of lives have gone, and the country is being bled white of its best treasures. Methinks it is not that God cannot, not that God will not; but that an immediate victory for this our land might only mean a recrudescence, in the basest form, of our national sins. That is why God is keeping this nation waiting. We have got to be brought infinitely lower yet, we have got to learn yet what the law of God stands for, we have got to learn yet what the hideousness of sin in a man or nation stands for, we have got to learn that sin means pain and blood-shedding to man, as it meant pain and blood-shedding to God; and when this nation is morally ready for victory, victory will not be delayed by an hour, but it will not come one hour sooner. Hence the necessity of our quietly waiting for the salvation of God.

The third thing that I want to say, is this. Faith can only be trained by being tested. Paul himself tells us this. As a man's muscles can only be hardened by exercise, faith is only trained by being tested, until it accepts the will of God not as a compulsion, not because it is driven into a corner where there is no alternative but accepting the will of God, but by free and unfettered and glad choice, until with Madame Guyon the faith of each one of us says—

I worship thee, thou will of God,
And all thy ways adore;
And every day I live I seem
To love thee more and more,

until we learn that His freedom is our grand control, and then faith is victorious. God tests us in order to train us—never to crush, but always to create us; never merely to deny us with an arbitrary will, but with an impulse of love which seeks our best and highest good.

Sometimes we learn this by our own impetuous efforts to hurry

God. There are two conspicuous examples of this. Do you remember Moses and his undisciplined effort at the deliverance of his people? How disastrously it ended for him. God had to take him back into the schoolhouse of discipline, and keep him there for many a weary year. By his impetuosity he had embarrassed God: and so do many of us. I remember Abraham with a wonderful promise to support him, with a vision so great that it staggered him, and God delayed its fulfilment until Abraham ceased to attempt to expedite God's promise. You know the awful story, and all that it afterwards led to, of Hagar and Ishmael. Sometimes God delays still further the promises of His faithfulness in order that we may learn the utter futility of our every effort, and all the sweat of our souls, apart from Him. God delays in order that faith may be educated and become a triumphant, glorious power in the life of us all; until our faith can say, "If God can afford to be unhurried, so can I; if God's glory is bound up with my life, if God's character is involved in my life, and if God can be unhurried, so can I." As we are content thus to wait in patience for the final interpretation of God's way, it will come to us and we shall be with those who through faith and patience inherit the promises—*overcomers*. Remember this: That the faith of God must be vindicated in us before it can be verified through us, and before we can be His effective messengers to the world.

One last word. There is nothing in common between quiet waiting upon God and lethargic indolence. We have known those who excuse their non-participation in the enterprises of Christ's Church because of the necessity of quiet waiting on God. Let me tell you that there is no greater mistake that any one of us can make than to wait for subjective manifestations and to neglect objective opportunities. There is no waiting upon God which does not express itself, in truth, in the expenditure of every energy of the soul at the clear direction of God, for the interpretation of which we do not need to wait. Oh, the supine folly of the man who in these days of tremendous opportunity is content to wait upon God to open doors, to wait upon God to enlarge opportunities, to wait upon God to organise success and influence for him, while he does nothing to sacrifice, to give himself, to inconvenience himself, to lose his life, for the sake of God! God does not co-operate with dreamers. We cannot live in fellowship with God and let evil alone in the world; we cannot live in fellowship with God and neglect the wide-open doors of the world which challenge our faith and our loyalty.

I cannot forget that God did once say to His people, "Stand still, and see the salvation of God." But I remember also that

that word was given to men and women, a great host, who were walking in implicit obedience to His leadership, and in that pathway had come up against the insurmountable. There are times in life when God says these words to us, but only when, like Israel, we are walking up to the last ray of light that we have of His will.

> We are not here to play, to dream, to drift:
> We have hard work to do, and loads to lift;
> Shun not the struggle; face it—it's God's gift.
>
> Say not, "The days are evil. Who's to blame?"
> And fold the hands, and acquiesce—O *shame*!
> Stand up, speak out, act bravely in God's Name.
>
> It matters not how deep entrenched the wrong,
> How hard the battle goes, the day how long;
> Fight on, fight on, tomorrow comes the song.

As you wait upon God in an energy of implicit and unquestioning obedience to Him, God will vindicate all His delays to you. He will do that as you stand, and as I stand, as men that wait for their Lord, doing His will to the very uttermost of our power; knowing that when He comes He will perfect that which concerns us; pushing the battle to the gate, knowing that at the strategic moment He will bring up reinforcements which shall mean the final factor in victory; quietly hoping for that we see not, saying to our souls again, and again, and again, "We see not yet all things put under Him, we see not yet the fulfilment of our every desire; but we see Jesus crowned. Blessed be His name for ever!"

IV

THE MINISTRY OF GOD'S CONTRADICTIONS

It has been my endeavour, as we have sat together before the Lord in this place, to show that God has many ways of revealing Himself in the lives of His people, and that some of His unlikeliest ministries are the most fruitful if we His people receive them as from Him, and recognise the controlling purpose of His love and wisdom expressed in them all. We have seen that sometimes He comes to us in the darkness and gets closer to us than we have ever suffered Him to get in the light. We have seen that in the bitterness of sorrow and bereavement and loss, in the impoverishment of our lives by the taking away of some of His most precious gifts, He has enriched us beyond our wildest dreams. We have seen also that the wholesome discipline of delay, which has perplexed so many of us in respect to our prayer, in respect to our intercession, in respect to our claiming of the clear promises of God, is all directed to the re-making of our lives with a view to being His effective witnesses; that God is taking pains with us because He loves us, and because His purposes of grace in regard to our lives are vaster than we can comprehend.

These ministries, as we have studied them together in these morning hours, have reflected, doubtless, the common experience of the vast majority of us; and I do not think I prophesy untruly when I say that in the darker days which are yet ahead of us—for the burden is not going to get lighter immediately, the gloom is not going to lift suddenly; we have not yet tasted to the full the bitterness of the cup which our Father is permitting us as a nation and people to drink—I venture to believe that in the days to come, there are few of us who will not find our experience reflected in some of these unlikely ministries of God which we have sought to comprehend together. If by God's grace we have got any interpretation of the past, and any illumination to help us in the dark days through which we have yet to pass, to God's name be all the glory.

We have learned this, I trust: that in the dark days we may have enough of His light to walk by at all times. We have learned that while we would see the distant scene, we do not always need to see it. But we do see the next step; and as we take it in faith

and trembling trust, God will vindicate that faith, and the light shall become clearer to him who follows the Lord. We have learned, I trust, that under the severest loss that may ever come to life, we may always have the compensating sense that God does it, and that therefore, it is all right, and that if we knew as well as He knows the end from the beginning, we should not only accept it but ask for it. We have learned, too, that when our designs are thwarted, and when the answer to our prayers is delayed, it is safe to tarry the Lord's leisure, and He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him in a larger, richer, fuller sense than they ever conceived when they presented these desires. So I trust we are learning something of the several dimensions of God's love—its breadth as well as its length, its depth as well as its height. In that love we shall be saved in trouble and adversity, we shall be sobered in joy and prosperity, we shall be enabled to set Him forth in the witness of an indubitable experience and an all-conquering faith, and we ourselves shall become, as we never have been, the reflected lights of the world.

This leads me to our last consideration: the ministry of God's contradictions. By that I mean God's method of intervening and asserting Himself in our lives to save us from the perverseness of our own wills, to save us from the issues of our wrongly formed purposes, to save us from the calamity of wandering from a will which we only imperfectly apprehend, and from following those siren voices which make appeal for our suffrages again and again, only to allure us on to ultimate destruction. God asserts Himself in many ways, and it is impossible to indicate more than a few of them. But God asserts Himself in many ways in our lives to make it impossible for us to pursue courses which are not in accord with His will, to save us from the issues of those things which we purpose of ourselves and follow of our own imaginings. God asserts Himself sometimes, it seems, almost with ruthless pitilessness in order to check us, when with headstrong and unsurrendered wills we would hurl us into a path of destruction and loss.

I take, therefore—though, indeed, I might open my Bible anywhere and find this truth asserted and illustrated—as a foundation of our simple meditation on this great subject, a fragment in one of our Lord's parables, a mere fragment of the New Testament, as you get it in Luke 12: 16–20, "Jesus spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid

up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?"

Will you notice these two statements, "And he said . . .; But God said." "And he said," asserting his will, expressing his determination, setting out his programme of life. "But God said," and God's contradiction is infinitely more powerful than man's purpose; and God's contradiction expressed God's final word in regard to that man. Though I use this only as an illustration, and do not intend to dwell upon the details or the many lessons of that parable, I want that we shall take these words, and in them find some interpretation of some of the perplexing experiences of our lives in the past, and take them as a light shed upon those same perplexing things which shall meet us all in the days to come. "And he said." What two different histories might be written on every life in this tent this morning! I might write a history of my own life under the title, "And he said." Then I should need to write a second volume under this other title, "And God said." There is a world of difference betwixt what God says in regard to the order of a man's life, and what the man, in his own unenlightened state, says for himself. We shall be wise unto life that is life indeed if we learn, ere we leave this place, and increasingly learn in all the remaining days of our pilgrimage, how to relate ourselves to the contradictions of God in humility, in faith, in yielded acceptance of His Word as to His very best for His children.

This is a story, as Christ told it, of a man who was in perilous and pitiful prosperity; a man whose revenues were swollen and whose soul was shrunken, a man whose life ideals had become idols: and when a man's idols become his ideals, and he can see nothing better than his own selfish aims and purposes, no star clearer by which to set his course, and no consideration more desirable by which to order his life, that man's utter deterioration is not long delayed. This is a story of a man who excluded God from his programme, who gained the whole world, as he conceived the world to be, and lost his own life. "But God said"—and I cannot but believe that we are justified in inferring that this, God's final contradiction in that man's life, followed upon many another intervention which had been unheeded; for God never speaks like this to men for the first time. This was a man to whom God had spoken again and again and again; this was a man upon whose self-willed course God had intervened again and again fruitlessly. Then, finally, God speaks in these words of which our Saviour gives us the record. Discipline ultimately

becomes retribution, if men will not yield to it. If I will not yield to the pressure which God puts upon my life to mould and shape me, to re-make me, a poor marred vessel, to re-make me as it pleases Him for His glory and service; if I rebel, and harden my heart, and stiffen my neck against God's providences and God's working, then the power which He exerts into present discipline will ultimately be retributive and punitive. So we may well take this man, without going into the details of his life, as an illustration of this ministry of God which many of us have known since ever we knew Him, and which every one of us shall know until the last day of our life on earth, until we shall see Him face to face, and are finally delivered from the burden of self's bondages.

First, let me think of this ministry in connection with our wrong conceptions and courses, as already hinted at. When hot-headed and cold-hearted worldliness takes hold of those who have made the kind of solemn professions which you and I have made in this place, God would not be what He is, and who He is, if He did not contradict us. Material things often gain the ascendency in our lives—and oh, in how many lives is that a tragedy, in how many lives of those who in this place have time and again seen the Lord, and made a vow to the Lord, in how many lives is that a pitiful tragedy! Material things have gained the ascendency and crowded spiritual considerations of loyalty and duty and surrender to God out of life almost entirely. When life is made to revolve round self as a centre, when the course of life is set by any other compass than the compass of God's most holy Word, when God's claims are tacitly ignored and politely disregarded, God would not be who He is, and what He is, did He not assert Himself in some unmistakable way to check us and save us from the fruits of our folly. So He asserts Himself by direct interventions of providence which dispose of our efforts by the destruction sometimes of those idols which dispute His sway in our lives, by the hedging up of our way, and making it literally and absolutely impossible to go along the road which we have chosen for ourselves. "He said . . . But God said." Blessed be God that, even when His Word seems unkindliest, it is most loving; blessed be God who never contradicts Himself, whose voice is always that of wisdom which is shot through with the light of love, and of love which is shot through with the light of wisdom.

Sometimes God's contradictions are like catastrophes, like a bolt that falls from the blue, and man's castle crumbles and man's hopes are put to death. God's contradictions sometimes seem more unkindly than anything we have ever identified with God before. Sometimes God's declarations are positive destitutions; sometimes

that wind, of which we have previously spoken, robs life of all its beauty. The "tree of life" is stripped of its fruit, its blossom, its leaf. Sometimes God's overshadowings of men seem like an overwhelming of them, as witness Psalm 44. Read that Psalm again, and mark the recurrence of that phrase which identifies God as the author of all that is terrifying there. Then remember He is the God of love, the God of a fixed and tender purpose. When these things come to your life, when these catastrophes come—the loss of health, the loss of home, the loss of fortune, the loss of security, the loss of loved ones—when God contradicts your own plans, may you have grace, and may I, to recognise that "this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." God give us grace in that hour to join in the song, "Blessed is the man whom Thou correctest, O Lord, and teachest him in Thy way." The danger is that we mistake the angel voice for the thunder, as it was with those who stood round about the Lord in that day when He heard a voice from heaven supporting Him in what was to be the last great trial of His redeeming life. The people said it "thundered," and others who knew their Lord better, said "No, but an angel spake unto Him."

The danger in life is that we hear the thunder and do not hear the angel; the danger in life is that we see second causes, and do not see the first love which allows or prompts them. The danger is that we say to ourselves, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" when by His other dealings with us He has forced attention upon Himself. We need to recognise and to receive this ministry of contradiction as His ministry; for only so shall we be saved from reasoning and revolt, and only so shall we be saved from bitterness and from the blight which comes upon the life of the man whose soul is embittered with God.

Let us speak in more general terms still. God does not contradict us—howsoever these contradictions be expressed—He does not contradict us to frustrate our aims. I believe with all my heart it is a cardinal point of belief in this Gospel of Christ's full salvation, that God works in us to *will* as well as to *work*. I believe that in the life which is surrendered to Him, every thought may be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. But I further believe that it is generally a long and painful process. God is not seeking to frustrate my highest aims and yours, but to fulfil them in larger senses than we have apprehended. God is not working in your life and mine to disappoint our hopes, but rather to deliver us from unsuspected evil which often lurks in our hopes. God does not work to baffle our energies, but to better them by diverting them to higher purposes than those to which self-will will direct them, and to the highest purpose of all—His

glory and His service. God loves us too well to provoke our spirits. By this ministry of contradiction He is seeking to persuade us into paths which are pleasantness, and ways which are peace. His contradictions are indications of His Fatherhood. He corrects us because He cares for us. His contradictions are in reality the kindest words that He speaks to us. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, saith the Lord, your ways are not my ways"; and only by contradicting our thoughts, and only by hedging up our ways, can He harmonise us to His own will, in which alone our fullest and best development is to be found.

Further, I want to say that part of the discipline of faith—this life to which you and I are now pledged—part of the discipline of faith is to have to go out obeying a plan which is only gradually disclosed. It is part of faith's education that we go out every day with sealed orders. It is part of the discipline of life that we have to be true to a gradually unfolding disclosure of God's will. This end will stimulate the fear of the unknown in our hearts. But the fear of the unknown itself quickens our fear of God when we realise that what seems an accident to us is a purpose to Him, that what seems a mystery to me is history to Him; for this day before it dawned came from Him, and He knows the end from the beginning. And so, as you go on, and as I go on, in the life to which we have given ourselves in Jesus Christ, faith will then be tested and trained, and life will be disciplined to the utmost fruitfulness.

For instance, in the realm of Christian service take two illustrations from God's own Word. There is the worthy desire of David of old to build a temple. The highest expression of worship which he could conceive was to build a house for God's earthly habitation, and he said: "This will I do: I will gather treasure from far and near, and build this great and magnifical shrine to God's name." But God said: "Thou shalt not build it; nevertheless, thou hast done well that it was in thine heart. But thou shalt not build it. Another shall build it, and thou shalt only have a preparatory share in this great service."

I take it, there are some of us who have had that same experience. We have sought to do some great thing for God, to build some great temple for God; and God has said, "Thou shalt not build it." There are some here who purposed to serve God in the regions beyond. God hedged up their way, and broke off with His own finger their purpose. I want that we shall all realise that when God thus contradicts our worthiest aims, it is always that they should be enlarged; it is always for betterment; it is always to do better for us than we thought.

When Mr. Sloan and I were in China, in 1904, at a sanatorium

in North China, a young American surgeon was wheeled into our meetings on a spinal carriage, and sat there in most of our convention meetings during that hallowed week. His arm was bound up, and he looked a wreck. I was told the story of that man, one of the most brilliant young surgeons who had ever been sent out by his Board from America to serve in China. He arrived just at the beginning of the terrible Boxer year, and ere he had been in China four months he had received such wounds, and in particular such wounds to his operating hand, that he could never again hold an operating knife; and all the preparation, and all the diligence, and all the sacrifice of past years seemed to have gone by the board. Now, listen! I expressed my sympathy to the leading member of his Mission at that loss. He said to me: "Mr. Holden, that man has done more to show what Christ is by his disability, than he could possibly ever have done by his surgery; that man has been a greater blessing in our missions than anything we have to record of God's goodness since the Mission was founded!"

Blessed be God, when He says, "Thou shalt not," there is always another side to it, and it is always, "Thou shalt"; and that young fellow, whose life-purpose seemed to be frustrated, only found a larger and more blessed ministry as he yielded submissively and sweetly to the contradiction of God, and he multiplied his life in numerous other lives. It is always so. I want to say to you, my friends, to whom God's contradiction has been a darkening perplexity—that that contradiction of God is the greatest blessing God could send. Accept it worthily, yield to Him, bow to Him; let not your preconception and your prejudice thwart the blessing of God which comes to you in an unlikely way.

I remember, again, that Paul himself purposed to go into Bithynia, a purpose which was quite inexplicable. As he looked out into fields, "white unto harvest," he essayed to go there, made his plans, and set out. But God said, "Thou shalt not." God said to him, in the person of the man of Macedonia, whom He sent in vision to him, "Come over and help us." God did not compel him to turn from his own course, but He constrained him as he trusted His love and His vision. A sympathetic correspondence had been created betwixt God and His servant, and obedience to that contradiction of God, on Paul's part, brought him into his greatest work, and ultimately brought him to sacrifice life itself. So God contradicts us, to lead us into fields we had never chosen for ourselves; God contradicts us in the interests of those whose faces we have never seen, and whose needs have never yet appealed to us. God deals with our lives as things of vicarious moment and power, and life acquires a redemptive value; and

your life and mine become instinct with new power of salvation to others, if we learn to live in glad, contented obedience when God says, "Thou shalt not."

I would like to say, ere I pass on to my last point, that there are some things which are sent to us that we may overcome them; and there are other things which are sent to us that they may overcome us. There are some crooked things that are sent to us that we may hammer them out straight; there are other crooked things which are sent to hammer us out straight, to make our lives worthy, and to impart to our lives a value they could never have, save by the stroke of sorrow, the smart of disappointment, the bruising of a rebellious heart. To learn to live in regard to God's contradictions, is life; to listen to His voice, to obey it even when we only partially understand it, to relinquish our own cherished plans, to cultivate a sensitive readiness to follow Him whithersoever He goeth—that is life, that is life which is abundant. It is through such a one that "rivers of living water" can flow. Therefore, if from the place of service God has called you to the place of prayer; if from the public ministry of His Word and the exercise of great influence He has made it impossible for you to go outside the door to some hidden sanctuary, praise His name for it; accept the new commission from His hand, and take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, according to this contradiction, that ye fulfil it.

I want to say, last of all, that I see the contradiction of God constantly ministering in the realm of conscience and self-judgment. We have said, repeatedly, as we have meditated on these things, that under the stress of circumstances and in all the experience of life, we acquire a knowledge of ourselves that we could not get in any other way. We learn the strange duality of our nature. We are finding that our ideals and tendencies are in conflict, that our moral liabilities and assets are very far out the one from the other; we are finding the existence of strange tendencies and disloyalties and insincerities, and aptitudes, and sympathies, and things unholy and unnamed. As this consciousness of ourselves sweeps over us and possesses us, as the awakened heart discovers its own nature, we say to ourselves, "Oh, sin has disqualified me from God's service. Never again can I preach His Word, never again can I take up the holy service which I have discredited. Failure has discredited me. Again and again God has trusted me, and I have failed Him miserably. Fear of myself paralyses me." And the soul who communes thus with himself, is in the dark. Listen!—and here is our hope—God contradicts the despair of our hearts by His Blessed Spirit. God says to the man whose sin has disqualified him, "The blood of Jesus Christ

cleanseth from all sin." God says to some in darkness, "If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." That contradiction of God is life to my soul today. God says to the man whose failure has discredited him, that "He giveth more grace." Grace which has been squandered may be replaced by fresh springs in his life; grace which has been misused and abused may all be renewed by the faithfulness of the God of all grace. God says to the man whose fear paralyses him, who is positively afraid to trust himself, to launch himself out on the sea of God's faithfulness —God says to such a one, "Fear not; I am with thee."

Christ Himself is God's final contradiction to every condemnation of heart, of memory, of conscience, of mind which may darken and becloud my life today. Christ is God's great contradiction of the sin of the whole world; and if I learn to live in Him, if I learn to be taken up not with my subjective experiences, but with the great objective facts of His love and changelessness; if I realise that these are only parts of His ways which are being disclosed to me, but that fully and finally He has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ the Lord—if I realise that, then the past will lose its angry look and become a benediction, the present will lose its anxious look and become a declaration of power, the future will lose its desolate look and become a proclamation of God's own presence, renewed, day by day, to me as need arises.

"He said . . . But God said." Oh, blessed contradiction of God! And I look back today, and you look back, and we see all the way by which He hath led us in this way and by this ministry, and we sing with all the redeemed—

> Above the rest this note shall swell:
> My Jesus hath done all things well!

even when I could not understand what He was doing.

May God help us each, and may God make each one of us to yield to Him with a new meaning every part of our lives—the unexplored part as well as that which has been experienced—and yield to Him as His Word comes to us. God grant us to follow Him in a pathway which shall mean life more abundant to those in the midst of whom we are set as God's own witnesses and sons; for His Name's sake.

VII

THE PRACTICE OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE

by the

Rev. W. Y. Fullerton, D.D.

1916

DR. W. Y. FULLERTON

An Ulsterman, with the characteristic brogue of Northern Ireland, Dr. W. Y. Fullerton was tall, bearded, and with kindly, humorous eyes twinkling through gold-rimmed spectacles. Like several other Keswick speakers, he attained eminence despite early disadvantages. Born in Belfast in 1857, his father died when he was only three years old; and in later life he used to speak tenderly of how much he owed to the simple, courageous faith of his widowed mother. He was converted when only 13, in Sunday school; and began preaching while still a lad, during a visit to Belfast by Moody and Sankey.

A decisive change in the entire direction of his life followed his coming to London for business reasons; for he attended the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and came under the influence of C. H. Spurgeon. The "prince of preachers" induced the young Ulsterman to enter his Pastors' College; and a close bond developed between them—Fullerton often deputised for Spurgeon, in the Tabernacle and elsewhere, and helped to prepare the scripts of his sermons for weekly publication. On completion of his college course, Fullerton formed an evangelistic partnership with W. J. Manton Smith, and together they conducted missions in all parts of the British Isles, for fifteen years.

When Melbourne Hall, Leicester—which had been erected a few years earlier by F. B. Meyer, to provide more scope for his freer type of evangelism than a Baptist Church permitted—called Fullerton to its pastorate in 1894, some of his friends wondered if he were wise to accept a settled ministry: but all doubts were soon put to rest. His eighteen years there were memorable, and he built up a large and strong church. A further contrasting sphere of service was entered in 1912, when he became Home Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society; and again he revealed masterly qualities, both as administrator and advocate for missions.

At Keswick, Dr. Fullerton was one of the greatly-beloved and trusted speakers, from 1908 until his Homecall in 1932. In its obituary tribute, *The Life of Faith* said of him: "His presentation of the Convention message was distinguished by the same freshness and virility which characterised his preaching at other times. He was never vague, never ponderous, and far removed from suggestion of platitude . . . While he never glossed over the sterner aspects of truth, it was obviously his delight to sound the wooing note as often as possible . . ."

One of the old-style extemporaneous speakers, Dr. Fullerton would stand with a small Bible in his left hand, and without a note would

turn unerringly from reference to reference. He gave Bible Readings on three occasions; but his outstanding series was undoubtedly "The Practice of Christ's Presence," delivered as mid-day addresses in 1916—and popular in book form ever since. For book publication, however, Dr. Fullerton amended and amplified the script considerably: here the Bible Readings are reproduced as they were delivered.

1

THE PROMISE

When the founder of this Convention was once asked to put in a sentence what had brought such joy into his life, and what has made the name of Keswick fragrant over the whole world, he answered in the words of the Psalmist, "I have set the Lord alway before me." That is the secret of everything; that is the true source of comfort; and that is the solution of every spiritual difficulty that can come to us in this mortal life. Nowhere in the world—at Keswick or anywhere else—can you find more. "I have set the Lord always before me."

I suggest that we should meditate on the Practice of Christ's Presence. I know that the very suggestion of such a title will challenge comparison with the meditations of Jeremy Taylor in his *Holy Living*, where, after speaking of the care of our time and purity of intention, he speaks of the practice of the presence of God. It will also challenge comparison with those of Nicholas Hermann, of Lorraine, better known as Brother Lawrence; but those two works are incomparable, and our intention and purpose are altogether different.

The Practice of Christ's Presence. Now it will be necessary that we should go in thought away to the mountains in Galilee, where the five hundred brethren at once met Christ, after His resurrection. It was a place known to them where the tryst was to be kept. They come from all quarters; and it should be easy for us here, amidst these mountains, to imagine some of the feelings that stirred their hearts as they gathered; for they came, as we have come, in the hope of meeting Jesus Christ. There were all sorts of people, but everybody present owed something to the Lord. Those whom Christ had blessed would be there; those who had been raised from the dead—Lazarus, the widow's son from Nain, perhaps the ruler's daughter; those who had been cured of their plagues—the man of Gadara, Mary Magdalene and others; the blind man who had been cured, Bartimaeus, and others who had received their sight. Zacchaeus would be there; and it would be an interesting study for any of us to think of all the people who gathered there that day.

Mary was there, and the brethren of Jesus were probably there. They all waited for the Master; and the Lord, who had breakfasted with the disciples by the lake in the early morning, came into the midst of them. They had back again the loved presence that had been lost, and they listened to His words; and can you imagine the thrill in their hearts when He said He would never leave them more, that He would be with them alway, even unto the end of the world? It was a great thing to get the commission to go out into all the world to preach; but it was a far greater thing to get the promise of the presence of Jesus Christ to be with them unto the end.

Now there are five things that appeal to me in this promise, and five things that flow out of it. First, that *it is the presence of Christ which is promised*; not God as God, but Christ as Christ. This was something entirely new. It was the same Christ whose feet had walked their hills, whose voice had entered into their consciousness, that was going to be with them all the days. It was not just the omnipresence of God. That is what Jeremy Taylor and Brother Lawrence discussed. The realisation that God is round about us as an impalpable Spirit, as a governing force in life. But this is something more than that. It would be well if we realised that it is the literal presence of the real Christ that is to be with us.

In the Old Testament, they recognised that God's presence was near. The Psalmist said, "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Thy hand shall lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me." Yet though men knew that, they tried to escape from God, because of their sins. Our first father tried to hide from God's presence; and Jonah tried to flee from the presence of God when he was told to go to Nineveh. But those who loved God tried to get near Him. When David brought up the ark to Jerusalem, he said, "Glory and honour are in Thy presence," and the worst thing that could happen to him was to be cast away from God's presence. But this is more than that. This is the presence of Christ Himself: that the Lord who was crucified for us, is to be by our side. We shall never want a crucifix; we shall think of Him, not as a dead Christ, but living near to us. It is not God as God, but it is God as Christ who manifests His presence. That is a great discovery to make.

Secondly, *this presence is guaranteed to certain persons.* He says, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel, and lo, I am

with you all the days." The "go" and the "lo" are together. It is those who go that can claim His presence. It is a missionary promise; and unless we are willing to be Christ's witnesses to all the world, it may be only in the little parish or town from which we come, because it is our bit of the world; unless we are prepared to be witnesses, we cannot claim this promise in its fullness. The Lord said, "All authority in heaven and earth is given to me; go ye therefore . . ." Now where does the power of the disciple come in? Is it in the great imperative of the Master, who has the right to order where He will? I think rather that the force is in the promise given at the end: Because I am with you, you are to go. Our Lord had previously said, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. Come unto me, all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He can give us rest because He has everything to bestow on us. Now He says, "All authority is given to me. Go therefore, and I go with you." So it is a promise given to certain persons. "You have my power, because you have me."

And *this is a promise for all places.* It has been verified in all the experience of the Church. He has been with His disciples into the broad places and the narrow places, in prisons and in palaces; and wherever men have gone, trusting in Jesus Christ, obeying Him, there the Holy presence has been realised.

Canon Robinson has said that if St. John were in London, "what wonderful things he would have to say about it; what clouds of glory he would see over Lothbury, what rivers would run down the valley of Cheapside!" Perhaps this is true. Perhaps if we had the seeing eye, Christ would be more evident in the common places of the earth. But it does not need St. John to make the discovery. There was a man, homeless and ill-fed, treading the Embankment, who grasped that Christ was there. He says—

> Yea, in the night, my soul, my daughter,
> Cry, clinging heaven by the hems,
> And lo, Christ walking on the water,
> Not of Gennesaret, but Thames!

I never cross the Thames without thinking of Francis Thompson, clinging heaven by the hems, and finding Christ walking on the water. But he went further, for later still he wrote—

> And bolder now and bolder,
> I lean upon that shoulder,

So dear
He is, and near:

And with His aureole
The tresses of my soul
Are blent
In sweet content.

Now you say, that is poetic imagination; ordinary people cannot realise Christ so near! Suppose, then, we think of Livingstone. Whatever Livingstone was, he was not a poet. In Africa one day he was met by a chief who refused to let him pass through his country. He thought he would cross the river in the night and get away; but opening his New Testament he read, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." And he said, "This is the word of a Gentleman of the most sacred and strictest honour. I will not cross furtively by night, as I had intended. It would appear as flight, and should such a man as I flee?" And he found the promise true—the Lord was with him: he practised the presence of Christ.

Or may I tell you of a little company of Russian peasants, who met to worship God in those bad old days, when to worship in any other fashion than according to the Greek Church was to incur the penalty of the law. In the middle of the service the agent of the Procurator-General entered; their names were taken, their number counted, and the police officer was going out, when the leader of the meeting said, "There is one name you have not got." But he said, "No, I have them all." "No," said the old man, "there is one you have not got." "Who is it?" asked the officer; and the answer came, "The Lord Jesus Christ." "Oh," he said, "that is a different matter!" Yes, that is an altogether different matter. But that is a thing that matters supremely—that we, as individuals, as churches, as a nation, may realise that the Lord has promised to be with us all the days, even to the end of the world.

Fourthly, this is *a promise of a perpetual presence.* As our Lord uttered them, the words were in a different order from that in our Bible. We have, "I am with you," but the original order would suggest that He was the great "I am," opening His arms to take them to His heart: "I with you am." The emphasis is on the perpetual presence. He, the great Jehovah, and you lying upon His heart: "I with you am."

And so the Lord is to be with us all the days; for most people translate it, rightly enough: "I am with you all the days." Dr. Weymouth, however, gives the best translation: "I am with you always, day by day, even to the close of the age"—that is, always

with you, perpetually; but yet day by day, only one day at a time.

You need never fear, therefore, to lavish your love on Christ; you may, without stint, let your heart flow out to Him. You sing—

Jesus, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far Thy face to see,
And in Thy presence rest.

Rest! You need never fear to love Him too much. In his book, *Invisible Playmate*, Mr. Canton tells how his little child died; and when God gave him another, he resolutely refused to let his heart go out to the second child, because the pain of losing the first was so terrible. Some of us understand that. But you need never fear to let your heart go out to Jesus Christ, because He will never fail you. He is with you always.

Is there any apprehension in your heart that there may come a day so difficult that Christ will not be present? He will be with us all the days. He will be with us in the waiting days, and in the working days; in the perilous days, and in the peaceful days; in the glad days, and in the sad days; on the birthdays, and on the death days; and however sad any day may be, the Lord's presence will turn your sorrows into joy, and you will find, as the American philosopher said, "Every day is the best day in the year."

Lift your heads, you sorrowing ones,
And be glad at heart,
For Calvary day and Easter day,
The saddest and the gladdest day,
Were but one day apart.

If you realise the Lord's presence, they will not be so far apart even as that.

Here comes a difficulty: Why did our Lord say, "*to the end of the age*"? He is not talking about the end of the world as a material thing: the end of this cosmos. It is the end of the present world order that He means. Now why did He limit His presence to the end of the age? Does He mean that, when the age is over, He will withdraw His presence? Not that at all: quite the reverse of that. We recognise that our Lord's presence in this age is different from His presence in the past age. The nearest thing I can find in the Old Testament to this promise is in Isaiah 63: 9, where it is written, "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them." Now that is beautiful.

What does it mean, "the Angel of His presence?" Was it the angel who stood nearest God who came to help the people? Gabriel, when he came to Mary, said, "I stand in the presence of God." Was it an angel like that? I think it was not the angel that stood in the presence of God, but the Angel that brought the presence. Our Lord is the Angel that brought the presence to us. He is in the bosom of the Father, and He comes to you and me; and He comes so near that the apostle could only explain it by saying that Christ is in us, and we are in Him.

Is that to end at the end of the age? Well, it is this way: As the presence of Christ in this age is greater, more constant, and less remote than in the past age, so in the next age, instead of Christ's presence being less, it is going to be greater. You know, this age is coming to an end in the day of the *parousia*. That word is generally translated "the coming of the Lord," but twice, when it is used about Paul, it is translated "presence," and it might justly be translated "presence" always. So at the end of the age there is to be a more glorious presence; there will be an outshining of the Lord's attributes: but in this age, day by day, His presence is guaranteed. Do you believe that?

When I was a young Christian I was greatly helped by what Miss Frances Havergal said: "That is a fact. The Lord said it, and you have to believe it, whether you feel it or not." I did not feel it; it was too great a thing for me; I felt I was too great a sinner and too humble a saint to think the Lord would be near me; but I had to believe it. Now, are you ready to believe that day by day, every day, always, through thick and thin, bright and dark, disaster or success, victory or failure, the Lord is with you? You may realise it in different phases, in different degrees, but it is constantly true.

Five things flow from that. The first is that, if you have the Lord's presence, *you are never alone*. Well now, that is true: you cannot be alone. I remember once in Bradford, in my mission days, my colleague Manton Smith and myself set apart a day to see inquirers, and among those who came was a lady, who said that she was deeply troubled. She had gone from church to church but had not found rest. We spoke to her, but it was all in vain. Then I suggested that instead of talking any more, she should go into a side room and have it out with the Lord. She stayed there so long that I was afraid something had happened; but at length she came out with glory on her face, and the only thing she said as she passed out of my life, was, "I shall never be lonely again!"

Now that is the secret, the pith, the marrow; that is the centre and the kernel and the whole of it; that is the one thing that

solves every difficulty, the master-key that opens every door. If you have the presence of Christ, you need never be lonely again.

In the second place, *sin will be different to you.* If we accept the Lord's word, and know His perpetual presence—not just as God is omnipresent, but the actual presence of Jesus as truly as when He walked with Peter and John—then sin will be a very different thing. An old saint has said, "I always sinned as in Thy sight." Jeremy Taylor advises people who desire to sin, to retire themselves wisely, and go where God cannot see, for, he says, "Nowhere else can you be safe." But you cannot go where the Lord is not, if He is with you always. You are like a child sinning in the presence of the father, or like a servant sinning in the presence of the master. You are sinning and grieving His heart every time you sin: "I am with you always." But if you realise He is with you, you will not sin. In 1 John 5: 18, the apostle says, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." And the Revised Version helps us: "He that is begotten of God, God keepeth him." Our old version is "keepeth himself." That is weary work. You have tried that, and you have failed; and the true rendering, which we learn from the real presence, is, "He that is begotten of God, the only-begotten and well-beloved, He keepeth him." It is not our doing; it is His blessed work.

Then, in the third place, *we need never fear as to our equipment, or as to our future.* You may not know where the Lord will send you, or what work He may ask you to do: but He never asks you to do anything without giving you the power. You need never trouble. This morning I had an attack of stage fright, at the thought of speaking on this great topic; but I said to myself, "You are a foolish man; you are going to tell these people about Christ's presence, and if Christ is with you, it does not matter who else is there."

Christ's presence is everything. John Brown of Haddington said he would not exchange the learning of one hour's fellowship with Christ for all the liberal learning in ten thousand universities through ten thousand years, even though angels were to be his teachers.

That is an ancient experience. Let us then take one more modern. Phillips Brooks was once crossing the Atlantic, and a young man wanted to see him. He thought he was in his cabin, so he went to the cabin door and knocked. As he got no answer, he gently opened the door, and found the bishop prostrate on the floor, and heard him say, "Oh, Lord Jesus, Thou hast filled my life with peace and gladness. To look into Thy face is earth's most exquisite joy." And he shut the door and went away.

Two things more are true. If Jesus Christ and I are together, *I must do for Him what He cannot do for Himself, and He must do for me what I cannot do for myself.* If there are things He cannot do, He will expect me to do them for Him. There is a kind word to be spoken today; He cannot speak it, but you can. There is a deed to be done, a sacrifice to be made, a witness to be borne; you must carry the Gospel to the region beyond; you must do that; there must be that co-operation. What the Lord cannot achieve, by His grace I will do.

The converse is also true: the things you cannot do for yourself, He will do. Do you remember when the apostle Paul was before Nero's court, and nobody helped him, and he could not help himself, he said, "Notwithstanding the Lord stood by me." When everybody else leaves me, the Lord will stand by me. Even when my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up.

He will always take your part, and safeguard your life. In Philippians 4: 5 there is a verse the meaning of which scarcely comes home to us: "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." You interpret that, perhaps, to mean that you are to be an abstainer from alcohol, because the Lord is coming by-and-by. It would be well to be an abstainer, and the Lord is coming: but the apostle says neither of these things here. It is not really "let your moderation," but let your sweet reasonableness, your meekness, or—as Bishop H. C. G. Moule translates it—your *yieldingness*. That is to say, you need not stand up for yourself. Why? Because the Lord is coming? No. Because He is at hand. The apostle knew that His presence was there, and so he says, "Let your sweet reasonableness be known to all men. The Lord is beside you." What you cannot and must not do for yourself, He can and will. You need not always be bothering about your reputation; you need not always be standing up for your rights; you need not fight to keep your place in the world. What does it matter? Let your yieldingness be known to all men: the Lord will look out for your place; He will look after your reputation. The Lord is near you.

So the promise comes down to us, through the centuries: the promise that was given to Moses. It did not mean to Moses what it means to you and me: "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." I humbly suggest to everyone who has come to Keswick seeking a fuller meed of grace, to make the answer of Moses their definite prayer: "If Thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence."

II

THE EXPERIENCE

ONCE again we think of the practice of Christ's presence. We have considered the great promise that assures our hearts that He is with us. Now we advance from the promise to the experience. To what part of Scripture would you turn instinctively for a picture of the experience of Christ's presence through the day? I would turn to that passage which, if I had been given the privilege of writing, I should have chosen to write sooner than anything else in the world—and that is the twenty-third Psalm. It was written long before Christ spoke those words on the mountain of Galilee which we have already considered; but such is the wonder of God's word, and such is the proof of the inspiration of the Scriptures, that always the words of sacred writers have far greater meaning than ever they understood.

We have considered the Lord's promise: "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Now we turn to Psalm 23; and where do we find the point of junction? Right in the centre of it—and the one enters into the other almost like a link: "Thou art with me." This is the soul's experience answering to the Lord's promise. "I am with you"—"Thou art with me." I hope we shall all be able to say that as a personal experience.

Bishop Hasse told me that the text for today in the Moravian text-book is, "This day we perceive that the Lord is with us" (Joshua 12: 31). We not only know it, but we perceive it. We have been frequently told that the world is waiting until the Church gives the word for the present situation; but what the world wants is not a word, but *the* Word—the revelation of a Person, the glorious Lord in all His manifested attributes; and the Church needs that, and we individually need it. May our prayer be abundantly answered, and Jesus stand among us today in His risen power.

Who is this that has to be present with us? We have heard the Lord say, "All authority is given to me in heaven and in earth," but we must remember that was the same Jesus who looked on the multitude and mourned over them, for they were

as sheep without a shepherd; and He sought those who strayed, to bring them home.

I think it was most fitting that when He came to the world, the first to hear the message should be the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night. The early Church had the thought of the Lord as shepherd before them more than any other; they knew they needed His care, and they believed they had it. In the catacombs, nearly always the Lord is pictured as a shepherd. That may mean that they feared to make any portrait of Him; but more likely it was because they felt they needed His tenderness and skill and wisdom and care. The people of God were then one in common experience. That is always the uniting thing between God's people—not doctrine, there we differ; not ritual, there we do not agree; but in experience we can all meet in a blessed unity. To any who misunderstand what Keswick stands for, it should be said that it is a meeting on the ground of experience. We may differ on other things, but there is a common experience: we can say, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

The early Christians not only pictured the Good Shepherd with lambs in His arms, but they actually dared to depict Him with a kid on His shoulders. We know that at last the great Judge will separate the sheep from the goats; but the early disciples got near the heart of the Lord when they represented the kid of the goats as being on His shoulders. He cares for the young people everywhere: the Good Shepherd's heart goes out to the children.

"The Lord is my shepherd." How did He become our shepherd? First of all, *He gave Himself for us.* He is the Good Shepherd because He gives His life for the sheep. "Therefore," He says, "doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life." I suggest the question: If the Father loves the Lord Jesus Christ because He laid down His life for the sheep, how much does He love the sheep? How did He become our shepherd? He found us; and the picture of the way He found us you find in Ezekiel 34: 11–15, "Thus saith the Lord: Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall their fold

be. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God." And you see how the twenty-third psalm fits in at the end of that: it begins where that leaves off. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." So He finds us.

Then *He wins us*, so that He can say, "You are my sheep," and we look up and say, "Thou art my shepherd—mine, mine; my shepherd." He marks us all; and, please remember, the mark is on the sheep, and not on the fold. If you ask me which is the true Church among the varying and often competing churches, I will say, "None of them," and then I will say, "All of them." The true Church is the assembly of God's flock.

Then on each He setteth
His own secret sign;
They that have my Spirit,
These, saith He, are mine.

The Lord is my shepherd. You will see that the word is "Jehovah"—at least, it is the word we pronounce Jehovah; the unspeakable Name, the Name the Jews did not speak, and never wrote fully. We do not know what the Jewish word was, because the vowels are not there; some scholars tell us that our vowels are all wrong—we might retort that probably theirs are wrong, too! They cannot answer back, because they are only guessing. We need not be careful how the word is to be pronounced, whether Jehovah, or Yahweh, because when we come to the New Testament the one thing that strikes us is that though the New Testament was written by Jews, the name Jehovah never occurs in it.

The second question I ask is this: Why is that Name, the Name the Jews never wrote in full and never pronounced, not written in the New Testament? The possible answer is that there is another Name that can be both written and pronounced. Jesus is Jehovah. So you may read, "Jesus is my Shepherd."

And then, *He cares for us*. Horace Bushnell says, "Jesus is not the keeper of a hive of bees, knowing well the hive, but not knowing any particular bee in the hive; He is a keeper of a flock of sheep, knowing not only the flock, but every sheep in it." Mr. Moody has a spicy bit as to how the shepherd knows the sheep. He described how someone asked that question of a shepherd, and he said, "I know them all by their defects. That sheep has a bit out of its ear; that one is lame; and that one has lost a bit of its wool." And I think that is true of us: the Lord knows us by our defects. But I thank God, He knows us by the grace He has given us, too. A few months ago I was in a business meeting

where we sang a hymn, and a man rose up and sang with rapture on his face; and I shall always remember that man by the sight of the glory that shone that day. The shepherd knows His sheep, and He cares for them, guarding them from their foes. We have enemies against whom we must be protected: the wolf—that is an open enemy; the thief—that is the secret enemy; the hireling—that is the false friend (John 10). The Lord can guard us from them all.

And *He calls us out.* He knows our name, and we know His voice. It is not necessary to know any other voice than the voice of the Lord. "They know not the voice of strangers," and if some of you who are trying to understand other voices—the various heresies of the day—would get a little more familiar with the Lord's voice, it would not be necessary to know the others, because you would be able to recognise His even in a crowd. An artist in words imagines Christ coming to him in Rome: "I saw the dead Christ over their altars, and then the living Christ came; He came down the steps of the Campigdolio, and He came to me and He stopped. 'Ah,' he said, 'is it thou? What doest thou here? Knowest thou not that thou art mine, thrice mine—mine centuries ago, when I hung on the Cross of Calvary for such as thou; mine again years ago, when you camest a little child to the world; mine once again when, forfeit by every law, thou wast given to me by the one who is a servant and friend of mine? Surely I will repay.' A great cry and shout arose from the crowd as He passed on; but among ten thousand times ten thousand I should know Him, and amid the tumult of a universe I should hear the faintest whisper of His voice." They know not the voice of strangers, but when Christ speaks His voice becomes delightfully familiar.

Perhaps I have spent too long on the first phrase; but then, the whole psalm is in it. A little child was asked if she could say this psalm, and she started it, and said, "The Lord is my Shepherd, and that is all I want." Is it really all you want? The presence of Christ is a very simple thing, but it is wholly sufficient. "Jehovah my Shepherd"—that is all I want.

But what I desire really to speak to you about, if I may, is this—the psalm is not only the expression of a saintly heart; it is the history of a single day. Godet points out that in the shepherd chapter of John's Gospel we have a picture of the day: in the first six verses, a morning picture; from the seventh to the tenth, an afternoon picture; and from the eleventh to the eighteenth, an evening picture. In the twenty-third psalm we have a picture of the whole day, from early dawn to dark. Once you get the clue, it is impossible to miss it. At the end of the psalm you have,

"Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days," that is to say, just as they have followed me today; and then, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever," or, as it is in the margin, "for length of days." So we have a picture of a day. If we are going to practise Christ's presence, here we have the experience.

There is, first, *the waking consciousness.* Before the mist of sleep has gone from my eyes, I say to myself in prospect of the day, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." Now you cannot begin the day like that unless the end of the previous day is on the right note; if your last thought is of the Lord, you will have a holy night, and when you open your eyes in the morning you will be able to turn instantly to Him who is your shepherd, and assert your faith in His daily care. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want": the waking consciousness.

Well, then, we go on to *the morning feast.* He calls His sheep from the fold. The green pastures are hard by, and He leads us into them. That is not the evening picture; that is the morning picture, that is how we begin. It is a great mistake if you do not know how to begin the day in calm, if you are so hurried in the morning that you cannot lie down in the green pastures. Every day we may be refreshed before the day's business. And He makes us lie down, because we are more foolish than sheep, who instinctively rest. But neither sheep nor men will lie down until they are fed! So the Lord forces us to lie down by the gentle compulsion of His love.

Wherever He shall guide me,
No want shall turn me back;
My shepherd is beside me,
And nothing shall I lack.
His wisdom ever waketh,
His sight is never dim;
He knows the way He taketh,
And I will walk with Him.

After the rest of the morning, we enter on the duties of the day. We not only have our personal delight, but we go out in the service of the world, until presently there comes *the noontide refreshing.* "He leadeth me beside the still waters"—not by the rushing stream, which would make the sheep afraid, but by some pool or well prepared for the purpose. The shepherd knew it was there, and fixed the day's journey so that when the sun was hottest we should come to the cooling stream; and He leads us by the still waters that we may drink and be strengthened.

It was at noon that the Lord sat on the well, and the woman of Samaria came to Him, and He led her by the still waters. Where

the Lord is, the waters never lack, for He Himself is the great fountain. Thomas Comber gave his life to the service of the Master on the Congo, and as he died at sea his final words were—

> Oh, Christ, He is the fountain,
> The deep, sweet well of love;
> The streams on earth I've tasted . . .

and his spirit went. But I think he finished the verse where the shepherd leads His flock still to fountains of living waters—

> More deep I'll drink above.

Then there is *the midday pause*: "He restoreth my soul." We need to know more the blessing of pause in life. In these days of stress, we think we do a great deal by rushing. But you will do more if you know what the nightingale knows, the beauty of the pause. We need to pause, because of the morning's way, because of the noonday heat, because of the afternoon's service that has yet to be rendered. "He restoreth my soul." That does not only mean that He brings us home from wandering; but our strength is weakening and we wait and have our strength renewed. I know a business committee that meets at intervals, and in the middle of the meeting there is wisely interjected a space for intercession; and some of the practical people say, "That is lost time; we are busy men; why spend so much time in prayer?" Yielding to their solicitations we have tried the experiment, and we have found that when we have not had our half-hour's prayer we do not get through the business. It is very much easier, when you get your soul restored, to go on with the work that awaits you afterwards. It is scientifically correct, and it is spiritually delightful. At midday, "He restoreth my soul."

Then there is *the afternoon progress*: "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness." That is the first active word of the psalm. We have to climb the hills to go on to the next appointment—He leads; that difficult task—He goes before, and I follow. "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness," that is to say, in right paths. If you and I keep company with Christ, we need not trouble which way to walk; we have only to follow. We are responsible for our life, but it is a different responsibility from the days when we sought ourselves to guide it; we are now only responsible for following and for obeying; not for choosing, not for trying amidst a variety of ways to find the path we should go. We have simply to know where the shepherd leads, and to go with Him. He leads me in the way of righteousness, in the right way; He teaches me

to do right things. And if you will allow me to suggest it, people who strain after holiness sometimes forget that they must also follow righteousness.

Mr. Gladstone said a thing which I constantly remember: "In many ways," he said, "some of them great, and some of them little, but all of them subtle, we are daily tempted to allow our religion to spoil our morality." But you never will suffer such disaster if you have the shepherd by your side, because He will lead you in the paths of righteousness; if you are holy, you will be led in the paths of righteousness—for His Name's sake. And so we say, "Shepherd, be true to Thy Name; bring honour to Thy Name, and lead me in the paths of righteousness, not for my sake, but for Thine."

At length there comes *the evening danger*—we must go into the valley of the shadow of death. That is not death, but the valley of the shadow of death. We are going down the hills, and we have to go through the valley. Into the glen we go in the gloaming, and there before us is the canyon. The shepherd did not lead us there at midday, because the sun would have been too burning; He does not go at night, because it would be too dangerous—nor does He ask us to go alone, but with Him we venture in. There are lurking robbers there; wild beasts and enemies are round about—and yet, because we go in with the Shepherd, we do not run; we walk there. There are lessons to be learnt in the shadows that cannot be learnt in the light. We shall understand more of the shepherd's ministries. His rod and staff will comfort us: the one will guide and protect, and the sheep that are nearest will know most about the crook. In *The Land and the Book*, Dr. Thomson tells us that the sheep that keep nearest to the shepherd are the fattest, because they first find the patches of succulent grass by the Shepherd's footsteps.

There is something else we shall understand if we will get nearer to the Shepherd. One of the most beautiful things in the psalm is the change of the pronoun. Up to this time we have been speaking about He, He, He; but in the valley of the shadow of death we say, not "*He* is with me:" that is too impersonal, too far away. We draw to His side and say, "*Thou* are with me." We are looking at Him all the time: "Thou art with me."

I thought His love would weaken,
  As more and more He knew me;
But it burneth like a beacon,
  And its light and heat go through me;
And I ever hear Him say,
  As He goes along the way:
"Oh, silly souls, come near me,

My sheep should never fear me;
I am the shepherd true."

And so, "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

And now there comes *the sunset grace.* The author of the psalm was too good an artist to change his simile midway. He still keeps to the metaphor of sheep: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." We have emerged from the valley, and there are more green pastures; the enemies lie in the shadow baulked of their prey: we cannot fight them; but if we cannot fight, we can feast, and we leave the fighting to the shepherd. He has prepared the table: He knew the green patch was there. That is why we had to go through the valley of the shadows; and though our enemies are round about, we fear them not; the shepherd is near.

Now there is the twilight, the brief twilight of a southern clime; and in it, *the twilight healing.* While we have been feasting, the fold has been prepared, and the shepherd stands with a great pitcher of water and a vial of oil. The sheep that have been worried or wounded, He anoints their heads with the oil; and He holds the pitcher, and all drink as they enter. Do not seek to avoid Christ at nightfall. Come near; He has an evening grace for you.

Whoever translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek—it is said that they were seventy wise men of Alexandria, though I doubt it—they changed this part of the psalm. They put a bit of their own experience into it; they said, "Thine intoxicating cup cheers me like the best wine." They knew how wine cheered them; and they knew, too, how the shepherd could gladden their hearts. The Word of God is so big that it will bear the putting in of your own experience into it. Most of us have some exhilarating experience that probably came to us in the gloaming—that is the most probable time—and I do not blame those men of Alexandria for saying that His cup intoxicated like the best wine.

Of course, this psalm may be the picture of the whole life-day, as well as one day in the life. The young convert in his exuberance says, "The Lord in my shepherd, I shall not want," and he goes on into the green pastures and beside still waters, and then learns the way of righteousness, and the maturing faith, and the final triumph. But let us keep to it as a picture of one day. We have got into the fold, and now there comes *the night assurance.* All day long I have been thinking that I have been following the shepherd; but now I find that I have been followed, and at the

close of the day I say, "Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days." Somebody calls them the shepherd's dogs. He has been caring for me in ways that I did not recognise. Harry Moorhouse said, "The Shepherd is responsible for the sheep, and not the sheep for the shepherd." We sometimes think we are both sheep and shepherd; but He is responsible, and "goodness and mercy shall follow" us.

Those are the pivots of the Epistle to the Romans: God's goodness causes us to repent, and His mercy leads us to present our bodies in consecration. But that is not all. What has been true today will be true also tomorrow. Because we are now doubly sure, we say, "Goodness and mercy *shall follow me* all the days of my life." The future tenses of this psalm are worthy of note: "I shall not want; I will fear no evil; goodness and mercy shall follow me." We are sure: the shepherd has brought us through the dangers of this day, and He will never fail us; so we say, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." And we lie down to rest in that faith.

When the day quite ends, there is *the sleeping resolve*. I do not know who translated this psalm, but I venture to guess that he was a Scotsman, because Scotch people are hopelessly astray in their "shalls" and "wills." There is no reason in the world why he should put "will" at the end of this psalm, instead of "shall." But I think that even in that he must have been guided by the Spirit, for it is not only an assurance as to the needs of the night as my eyes are closing: it is not only, "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever," but it is, "I have been so satisfied today that I *will* . . ." The evening determination; the night resolve. I *will* dwell with the shepherd for ever. And if you end the night like that, you will begin the morning with, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want"—you will get into the "shalls" in the morning. "I will dwell in the house of the Lord . . ." And in another place it says, "They that dwell in Thy house, they will still be praising Thee."

So I sleep because He wakes, and I trust because He watches; and beneath the purple skies studded by diamond stars there is peace. The Shepherd will be there in the morning; and I know, too, that He will not be missing on that other morning which some day will break beyond the stars.

III

THE EXPRESSION

In the practice of the presence of Christ, our experience will always demand expression. Emotion is to be followed by motion, knowledge by acknowledgment, faith by prayer. It will be impossible for us to keep company with our Lord without praying; and the only way to learn to pray is as we are taught by the Lord, who is at once our great High Priest and mighty Intercessor.

He has indeed already taught us to pray, giving us in words familiar to us all both the model and vehicle for our supplication. He gave it twice in the Gospel story—first in ordered discourse; and then, when some of John's disciples came late for school, He gave the lesson over again. We have the full prayer in Matthew 6. It is generally called the Lord's Prayer, and rightly so; for it is a prayer to be prayed in company with the Lord Jesus: we have His personal presence as we pray it; He puts the words into our mouths. He does not pray this prayer with us: He cannot pray "forgive us our sins," for the great miracle of all Christ's life, the greatest miracle, was that He was sinless; yet by His mighty sacrifice He joins us to Himself, for "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

You will notice that the Lord takes it for granted we are going to pray. He does not say, "If you pray . . ." He says, "When you pray." He takes it for granted that we shall pray every day, for there is a petition that will only last for a day; therefore the whole prayer must be a daily prayer. He tells us to avoid vain repetitions, and yet He exhorts us to pray "after this manner," to use these words. We may be quite sure they will never become vain repetitions if we use them in His presence, and with a sense of His nearness.

This is a prayer for the disciples of Christ. At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, the multitude went to Christ; but the disciples went apart with Christ, and He taught them to pray. It is not the prayer for the worldling, but for the disciple of the Son of God: "After this manner pray ye."

It is also a prayer for the present time. Some think it is for the past time, and others think it is not to be prayed until the Kingdom is set up on earth. Our Lord taught His disciples to pray for all time. It is also a prayer that should be prayed on the mount. The Lord went up into the mountain, and when He was set He prayed. You will only be able to pray truly as you come on the mount with God, and dwell there with His sunlight in your soul.

When shall we pray this prayer? In the morning, because we ask for something for the day that is now beginning. But only in the morning? I suggest that, as the Jewish day began at sunset, you can imagine our Lord going to the mountain at nightfall, and, in the view of the coming dawn, saying, "Give us this day our daily bread." So the prayer is for the whole life, not to be prayed only at special intervals of the day, but at any time of the day. To be prayed by Christ's disciples, living in His own presence, and taught by His own lips. To be prayed with a new content poured into it every day. I pray that these familiar words which we have thought exhausted may become charged with new and infinite meaning, because they are God's words, and are therefore tremendously expansive.

You will notice three things about this prayer: first, its simplicity; secondly, its brevity; and thirdly, its finality. It is quite simple. It is a prayer for childhood; our little ones repeat it. And it is a prayer for the oldest age. It is so brief—I think our Lord would suggest that true prayer will generally be brief. Dr. Arnot says, "I suppose there are two kinds of brevity in prayer: one because you are far off, and the other because you are far in." Dr. Maclaren on his deathbed was much interested in a letter which Carlyle wrote to Erskine of Linlathen, saying that he woke one morning before the dawn, and though he had not been accustomed to pray this prayer for years, "I never felt before how intensely the voice of man's soul is in it, the inmost inspiration of all that is high and pious in human nature."

Dr. Thirtle makes a suggestion worthy of consideration when he draws our attention to two passages of Scripture—Romans 8: 15, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father"; Galatians 4: 6, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." He suggests that "crying" means praying, and that "Abba, Father" directs our attention to the Lord's Prayer. Just as the chairman might announce at a meeting, "Let us sing, 'Praise God'," and you would know that he meant you to sing the Doxology, so when the Spirit of God comes into your heart,

He teaches us to pray "Abba, Father"—to use the prayer our Lord gave, which is more than a form, because it is informed by the Spirit; and we cannot pray aright unless the Spirit of sonship teach us. For the moment you will see that I make no distinction between the Spirit of Jesus and Jesus Himself, for our Lord is present by the Spirit.

You will notice there is no praise in this prayer; there is nothing here for extraordinary times or special occasions. But the prayer really is not ended: I think it is only the introduction. We are allowed to add our own personal petitions, and our paeans of glad hosannas. The early Church understood that, and enriched it by adding, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever." I think we would all want to add something to the prayer.

> Praise is more divine than prayer;
> Prayer points the happy road to heaven.
> Praise is already there.

None of us would wish to adopt the Revised Version here, else our prayer will end with the devil!

This prayer, while not for extraordinary occasions, is something in which all Christians can join. There is no man who has faith in Christ who has not a foothold here. It is the house of the Lord in which we dwell for ever. To me it is the palace of prayer. It has at either end a great dome; the one is an observatory, and the other is an oratory. The one is, "Our Father which art in heaven," and the other, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever." Then there are nine great halls, and two staircases. I am not sure if you have enough of an architectural mind to follow me, or whether I have a lucid enough mind to explain what I mean. Beginning at either end there is first the dome: there are two rooms on the ground floor, and then two rooms one above the other, and an archway in the middle, and a room over it. You do not understand that! Let us try again, and begin in the middle. There is an archway with a room over it; beside it on each side are two rooms, one above the other; then on each side two rooms on the ground floor, and at the ends the great domes. The staircases are the word "as." In the first part of the prayer—"Thy will be done on earth *as* it is in heaven," and in the second part, "Forgive us our trespasses *as* we forgive . . ." You go up one stairway, and down the other.

You see that the Lord takes it for granted we are going to pray about His things before we pray about our own. He does not tell

us to do it; He takes it for granted. That is the best way to get a thing done! We are too apt to emphasise things because we think people are not going to do what we say; take it for granted, and pass on! Our Lord takes it for granted we are going to pray this way. I want to ask you very solemnly, Is that how you pray? I confess it is not how I pray. I find myself praying quite differently. I pray first for my things. But the Lord teaches the disciples that their first prayer is for the Father's concerns, and then the needs of the children.

Believing that our Lord used language carefully, and that the very words are inspired as they are written, I think it is well to notice the significant difference between the first and the second part of this prayer. You will notice that the three petitions concerning the Father's things stand separate and apart. There does not seem to be any door leading from one room into the other: "Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." If you pray for the Father's things, and say, "Hallowed be Thy Name," that will gain the kingdom and the will, because if one prayer is answered, the others are sure to be answered also. But when you come to our things, the contrary is true. "Give us this day our daily bread, *and* forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us, *and* lead us not into temptation, *but* deliver us from evil"—the doors are wide open.

Come with me into these rooms. First, let us go into the room under the dome at the end—I do not know whether to call it the observatory or the oratory. As we look through to the skies, we begin with "Father." Now remember it is the Lord Jesus teaching us, and to me it is significant as a matter of Christian experience that He does not ask us to pray to Himself. I think we may pray to the Lord Jesus Christ; I think if you are quite sure you are in close contact with Him you may, perhaps, be allowed to say, "Dear Jesus," but I am scared when I hear people talking with such excessive familiarity. The Lord would have us to be truly reverent; and He has told us that He needs not to pray to the Father for us, because the Father Himself loveth us. If, then, we love Christ, we pray to the Father. I think we may pray to the Holy Spirit. But our prayer is to be chiefly addressed to the Father, and we are to remember that we are sons. The filial thought comes foremost in prayer. We must never lose the emphasis on the individual Fatherhood of God in these days, when the universal Fatherhood is so much emphasised. It is well to remember that the relation between the regenerate soul and God is different from the relation between God and the unregenerate. When we receive Jesus we have power to become

children of God, and are taught to look up and say "Our Father." The sons turn to the Father, and gain secret content by mentioning His Name. The most saintly men as they grow older seem to delight in thinking of God as "Father." A recent story tells of a simple soul in the countryside who ended the day by saying, "Thank you, Father," and he began the day by saying, "Morra, Father; how's all up aroun' th' throne this mornin'?" If you have a spirit of reverence, it is beautiful to be able to talk to the Father quite simply.

Then again, it is to "our Father who art *in heaven*" that we address our petitions. We are not to pray to the Christ on the earth, nor to think that the immanence of God is the great thing; it is to the transcendent God in heaven that we are to pray. And where is heaven? Above and beyond us, but perhaps not so far away. Our Lord tells us to go into the secret chamber and pray, and there, often—

> Heaven comes down our souls to greet,
> And mercy crowns the mercy seat.

Heaven is an old Saxon word, *heave-en*, meaning lifted up; and when you pray, you are heaved up, and you rise to God, and God comes to you, and there is the blessed meeting and fellowship. This fellowship is also with all the children of God, as well as with the Father: we must not forget the plural prayer: "*Our* Father, which art in heaven"—it is the observatory.

Now come into these rooms; and let me say that each room is a college and a shrine. In each there is something you must learn, and something you must offer—something to receive, and to give. We begin with the room of the Name: "Hallowed be Thy Name"—the Name of Father, the Name that conveys to us all we know of God. The name of a person is all I know about him. If my name is mentioned to you, it does not mean much to you—only, perhaps, a man who speaks at Keswick. But when it is mentioned to my wife, it means more than that. She knows more about me than you do. The Name of the Lord is all that I know about Him, and I pray I may know more. Then if the Name represents all He is, "Hallowed be Thy Name" is a prayer that more may know His Name: the sun cannot be more glorious than it is, but sometimes there are fewer clouds. That is what we learn here of the glory of the Name.

What do we give? We offer up our own name. Oh, my dear friends, it is not quite so easy to pray this prayer as you fancied. You cannot get through this room without saying, "Henceforth it is Thy Name, not my own name, that is to be magnified." The

itch of publicity, the desire for renown, is to be taken away; you put your own name on the altar, and you say, "The first thing I pray is, not that I may have a name, but 'Hallowed be Thy Name'."

We come into the next room: "Thy kingdom come." Here we learn about God's claim on us. The Father has a kingdom, and the Lord is a King. We say, "Thy kingdom come," even before we think of anything we need, even before we are sure our sin is forgiven. We honour His law; and even if His law condemns us, we would not ask the Lord to abate a jot of it.

A friend of mine was once asked to visit a drunkard. He tried several times to see him, but when he called at the front door the man slipped out at the back. So he entered into a conspiracy with the man's wife, and one day when her husband had pawned his clothes, and could not go out, the wife sent a message to that effect. The man was fairly cornered, and after some general talk, his visitor suggested that his master had evidently treated him badly, and asked if he would not change masters. They knelt in prayer, and then my friend said, "John Fish, pray for yourself." There was a pause, and presently came the words, "Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name, Thy kingdom come . . ." and he broke down. He could go no further. But the kingdom that is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost came into the man's heart.

But that is not the real meaning of this petition, though it may be used in the sense of the kingdom coming into the individual life. The real scope of the prayer is that the kingdom of the Lord may come the world over. We pray that the rule and reign of the Lord may be extended. Now if I am going to pray that, I shall have to have some idea how the kingdom is coming. Some believe that the kingdom is coming by the spread of light gradually; others—and I am among them—believe that one day the King will come and usher in the kingdom. The chief thing is, do you believe His kingdom is coming? Do you believe it so much that you pray for it every day before you think of your own things? Then you will have to offer on the altar in this room your own plans and ambitions. Come, this is getting harder. If my ambition is to see His kingdom come, I cannot crave renown for myself: I must be willing to decrease that He may increase.

Now we come to the third room: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This is the room that is generally draped with crêpe in our thoughts. It ought to be garlanded with flowers. The first thing we learn, if we learn it truly, is that God's will is our weal; that God's will is our joy. A friend of mine

went to a lady's house and found her with her head on the table praying, or thinking; and when she raised her head, he saw she was weeping. She said, "I have been trying to pray the Lord's Prayer, and I cannot get through." She said she had prayed it thousands of times in the glad days, but in these days of disaster, with the presence that was so dear to her missing, she could not get further than "Thy will . . . " and she could not say ". . . be done."

Yet even in our sorrows we may take away the crêpe if we remember that the will of God is not a passive thing, but an active. We do not pray, "Thy will be *borne*," but "Thy will be *done*." It is not in dumb resignation that we are to pray this prayer: there is a good deal of resignation that is almost mutiny. We say we are resigned; but our submission is forced: we would alter the Lord's will if we could. With Christ at our side we are not to be resigned to the Lord's will, we are to delight in it. He said, "Lo, I come; to do Thy will is my delight." The Lord who is beside you said it was His meat to do the will of His Father. An illustration is given of a steamer on the river, going against the current—that is like a man who is rebelling against God's will: His will is this way, and your will that way. Presently the steam is shut off and the steamer drifts down the current—that is the man who is resigned. By and by the steamer turns round and goes with the current—that is a man delighting in God's will. My will, with all its power, co-operating with God's will; and the more I keep company with Christ, the more power He gives, so that I can say, "God does what He pleases, and I do what pleases Him."

"Thy will be done." When we come to that, we learn to offer up our own will. Henry Martyn said, "When I can say, 'Thy will be done. Teach me to do Thy will,' it is like throwing ballast out of the balloon. My soul ascends immediately, and light and happiness shine around me." John Woolman, whose *Journal* is one of the great books of Christian experience, says, "When our minds entirely yield to Christ, that silence is known which followeth the opening of the last of the seals. In this silence we learn abiding in the divine will, and then feel that we have no cause to promote but that only in which the light of life directs us in our proceedings." Oh, for this silent yielding of our souls to the Lord!

Laid on Thine altar, O my Lord divine,
Accept this day my gift for Jesus' sake.
I have no jewels to adorn Thy shrine
Nor any world-famed sacrifice to make;

But here I bring, within my trembling hand,
This will of mine—a thing that seemeth small;
And only Thou, dear Lord, canst understand
That when I yield Thee this, I yield Thee all.
It hath been wet with tears and dimmed with sighs,
Clenched in my grasp till beauty it hath none:
Now from Thy footstool, where it vanquished lies,
The prayer ascendeth, "Let Thy will be done."
Take it, O Father, ere my courage fail,
And blend it so with Thine own will, till e'en
If in some desperate hour my cry prevail,
And Thou giv'st back my gift, it may have been
So changed, so purified, so fair have grown,
So one with Thee, so filled with peace divine
I may not know, nor feel it is my own,
But gaining back my will, may find it Thine.

"Thy will be done," we pray; and if you know what the will of God is, you will pray it with emphasis and with joy. "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish"—"Thy will be done." "Rejoice evermore; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you"—"Thy will be done."

We ascend the stairway to learn the full meaning of it: there is room above room—"Thy will be done on earth *as it is in heaven.*" How is it done there? I cannot explain it better than by telling you of a teacher who asked his class this question. Various answers came. One child said, "It is done perfectly"; another said, "It is done cheerfully"; another, "It is done every day"; and one little mite said nothing, but when pressed for an answer she said she thought they did it without asking any questions. That is the way the will of God is done in heaven. So we take away the crêpe, and we will rejoice and do His will.

Go on to the next room. It is a holy place, and that is why I put it over the archway, to raise it above common thought. "Give us this day our daily bread." At first it seems a descent; but there is nothing higher than to yield our bodies to the Lord, and that implies that the daily bread is to be sanctified. If you are going to do God's will on earth, it is inevitable that the next thing must be that He will give you your daily bread—or, wherever you do His will, you will not do it on earth! So we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," and it becomes a sanctified prayer. It means not luxuries, but necessary things. You had your morning meal. What had you to eat? Was it meal? As a matter of fact, at our house we had scrambled eggs. As the word "meal"

includes all usual things, so when we pray, "Give us our daily bread," it is the necessary things we ask for; and the Lord is tender and pitiful and gracious, and sometimes He gives us a stray bit of butter on the bread.

What are we to offer here? All our possessions, so that everything we have may be His. Somebody says, "How can a man say, 'Give us our daily bread,' when he has his bread in the cupboard?" Because it is the Lord's, although it happens to be in the cupboard; and the cupboard is the Lord's, too. And we can pray with gladness, because the power to enjoy the bread comes from Him. We pray in the plural, because we pray also for the people round about us. We pray in fellowship with the Lord who walks among the people, who is working in the world today, and who is seeking the poor to raise them up. And if I say, "Give us this day our daily bread," I must also consider the poor, if I am to have His blessing.

Then we come to the next rooms, one above the other: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us" —forgive us in the heavenly place, as we forgive in the earthly place. That is not difficult, because we are accustomed to forgive people. It is not that I say, "Lord, I have brought myself to forgive so-and-so, and therefore I claim forgiveness." But it is that I interpret the Father's heart by my own. You who are fathers make excuses for your children, and you forgive them; you may be stern with their faults, but you are looking for the least inkling of a desire to receive forgiveness—that is the father's heart. If, then, I, a father on earth, am ready to forgive my children, my Father in heaven will forgive me my trespasses. Of course, I must have the forgiving spirit. In the following verses our Lord emphasises this: "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasse ." But it is not a hard condition God exacts from me; it is our own fatherhood pleading the Fatherhood of God: so I pray, "Forgive me my debts."

Daily they are to be forgiven. I hope there is nobody here so blind as to say they do not need forgiveness. I hope the day is past when we have to dispute whether Keswick stands for sinless perfection. Every sinner is taught to pray daily, "Forgive us our trespasses." There are always debts to be forgiven; but, thank God, there is always forgiveness with Him. It is a great thing to start the day as a forgiven sinner. You say, "I would give anything if I could say I am forgiven, if I could get rid of that crimson blot on the past; but I can never get away from that." But you can. Our heavenly Father can do that, just as He gives you the daily bread. Yes; He answers that prayer just as He answers the

other. As I go down to breakfast each morning, and the odour of coffee greets me on the stairs, I say that the Lord has given me my bread; and He has also forgiven me my sins, and I go down each morning as a forgiven sinner. Every morning starting afresh in the peace Christ gained for me on Calvary when He died for me, and cleansed me in His blood, and again bestowed when I confess my sins. As surely as He has given me food, He has given me release. He is the giving God, and He is the forgiving God.

What shall here be offered on the altar? My rights. It is a great thing to be ready to renounce the things we might justly claim, if claiming them will bring any dishonour on the Lord. To stand on my rights is sometimes the wrongest thing I can do. If I am myself forgiven, I cannot go out and take my fellow-servant by the throat and say, "Pay me what thou owest." If God had stood on His rights with me, I should have been undone.

In the next room we ask to be led along the perfect road; but if danger lurks in some road, we ask Him not to lead us that way if there is any other way that will do, especially if it is a way that has been a snare to us in past days. "Lead us not into temptation." A woman who had been reclaimed from drink was asked, "Do you ever touch drink now?" and she answered, "When I think of the drink, I fall on my knees and pray." Now, however old a Christian you are, you know that you always walk beside a precipice. Thank God, He who walks with us always walks on the precipice side. "Lead us not into temptation."

Here we must offer up all the doubtful things in life. If I were to name some of them, you might say that yours were not mentioned. But the Holy Spirit will mention yours. We offer up these things that have led us into temptation before. We cannot pray, "Lead us not into temptation," and straightway rush into temptation.

"But deliver us from evil." That may be looked on as part of the previous petition, but I prefer to think of it as another. There is a whole territory in life that may be called temptation, where you and I are not called to go except to the rescue of others; and then, conscious of our own weakness, we continue to pray this prayer, "Deliver us from evil." Here we offer ourselves on the altar. We have already put there our name, our ambitions, our will, our possessions, our rights, doubtful things; now, lest there should be anything unsurrendered, we give ourselves. So we find that we have to *live* this prayer if we are going to pray it. You cannot live as one man and pray as another. You have to come

into harmony with the prayer; and the way to do that is to live in harmony with the Lord who teaches it.

Then we end up with the ascription of glory and praise and honour: "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever," and again we look out to the skies.

IV

THE PRACTICE

The realised presence of Christ means a life of prayer without ceasing, and of praise without pause. The whole day should be filled with the heavenly traffic. Brother Lawrence says that "we should establish ourselves in the sense of God's presence by continually conversing with Him." So each task of the day may give us an opportunity of raising our hearts to God: we should speak to Him before each task, and during each task, and after each task. Then we shall have our definite times of prayer; and, quoting again from Brother Lawrence, "One way to recall the mind in time of prayer, and to preserve it in rest, is not to let it wander too far at other times."

Now that is the topic before us: How we may prevent it from wandering too far at other times. Of course, we are to have our definite times of prayer. It will be essential that we have a place for prayer, and a space for prayer every day. Because we are such creatures of circumstance, and because of the power of the association of ideas, I think everybody will agree that it is very helpful to have a place set apart for prayer: the corner of a room, the side of the table, or a spot beside the bed. We must also have a space for prayer. It used to be a motto years ago at Keswick, "Watch the morning watch," and it is probably true for most Christian people that the early hours are the rudder of the day. But even in this you may get into bondage, because sometimes in the busy industrial life of our towns it is almost impossible to have the best time of the day early in the morning.

It is worthy of note that our Lord seemed to have His great prayer times at night; and the apostle Paul tells us more than once that he prayed night and day. If we go to the Psalms for guidance—that is the experience book of the Church—we find varieties of times in which the ancient singers praised and prayed. In Psalm 5: 3 we read, "My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up." In Psalm 59: 16, "I will sing of Thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of Thy mercy in the morning." In Psalm 92: 2, "To show forth Thy lovingkindness in the morning, and Thy

faithfulness every night." And in Psalm 119: 147, "I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hope in Thy word," and in the verse following, "Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in Thy word." In v. 62 of the same Psalm we read, "At midnight will I rise and give thanks unto Thee because of Thy righteous judgments;" and in Psalm 55: 17, "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud; and He shall hear my voice." You remember that it was Daniel's custom to pray three times a day. But the climax of all is in Psalm 119: 164, where the singer says, "Seven times a day will I praise Thee because of Thy righteous judgments." That is the perfection of praise.

Some of the old masters in intercession have left us guidance. Bishop Lancelot Andrewes has gone deep into the matter of prayer, in the book which he wrote for his own guidance, but which was happily afterwards given to the Church of God. William Law tells us that he divided the day into "watches" of three hours' interval; and the suggestion I am going to make is that we should pray seven times a day—not that we are to confine our praises to any specific times, but hold continual converse with our Master by our side. The religious life will not be sanctified unless we have a hallowed day in the week, and no day will be sanctified unless we have hallowed hours in it.

Where shall we begin? In the morning. First, we agree that there should be the *morning prayer*, the morning watch; and as I suppose the busy life for most of us begins about nine o'clock, I am going to begin at that hour. I know that it is too late for some, and I have a suspicion it may be too early for others; but we will adjust things as we go on. At the morning prayer at nine o'clock, as we begin the business of the day, I think we might get into the holy habit of committing the day to the Lord. It may be only a short space that can be given, but there should be a space to put the day with all its problems into the Lord's hands; in praying to One who is not afar off, but is by our side, and through Him to the Father who is in heaven. Surely we should pray for guidance, and for patience. We should pray that we may have the spirit of wisdom and pluck. We should open our minds and our muscles and our nerves to the great presence by our side; for our Lord is Saviour of the body. And then, with blithe step and bounding spirit, we can go out to the work of the day.

There is an old legend of which I used to be very fond, about a monk in his cell; as he prayed in the morning the presence of Christ was manifestly with him, and his heart was filled with glory. Just then the bell summoned him to the kitchen for the service of the day, and the question arose whether he should stay

in the cell with the Master, or go to the menial duties of the house. Discipline prevailed, and he went to the kitchen duties, and hurried back—I am afraid he hurried through his duties, too —and when he came back to his cell the Lord was still there, and with a smile He said, "Hadst thou delayed, I had departed." That is beautiful, but it is not true. There are lots of beautiful things that are not true. The truth is not, that if Christ comes to you in your morning prayer, you are to hurry through your daily duties in the hope that you will find Him there when you return. The truth is that He will go with you into the kitchen, and return with you to your evening worship. That is far finer than waiting in the cell. Patrick, the saint of Ireland, knew that. His morning prayer, as translated by Mrs. Alexander, runs like this—

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me;
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet and in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

Or, as another translation of the last lines runs—

Christ in the fort,
Christ in the chariot seat,
Christ in the poop!

You have to go away and fight, or drive, or steer; but whatever the duty be, Christ will go with you into it. So we have the morning prayer.

Then without any contradiction we shall have the *evening prayer.* It would be fine if we could end our days at nine o'clock. We will therefore in thought jump the twelve hours from nine in the morning to nine at night. That will be early, or late, in varying circumstances; but we may modify it according to our own life. But it would be a good thing if we could get the sense of rest about nine o'clock in the evening, and feel that we were relieved of the pressure of the day in the evening hours; that there comes a time of relaxation. And if at nine o'clock in the morning we commit the day to God, surely at nine o'clock at night we can commit the night to Him, asking for forgiveness and bringing our praise, and committing to Him the hours that are to be unconscious. I think a great deal of our Christian character is formed in the hours of sleep. The subconscious mind works then, and if you

give it proper direction before you sleep, probably some of the strength of your Christian living will come to you when you are unconscious, but when the great shepherd is watching over you and caring for you.

For the weariest day
May Christ be thy stay,
For the darkest night
May Christ be thy light,
For the weakest hour
May Christ be thy power,
For each moment's fall
May Christ be thy all.

"Evening, and at morning, and at noon." From the very earliest days of the Church, the *noon hour* has heard a special call to prayer; and in these days the call is repeated from very different quarters. If we pray in the morning for the day, and in the evening, the night, at noon we should pray for the world. When it is noon with us in Britain, and the sun is highest, it is 8 p.m. in China—their day is finishing; and it is 4 a.m. on the Pacific Coast of America—their day has just begun. So, as at our noon the light on a summer day is shining on almost all the people of the world, surely our thought might go up in a missionary prayer. You will not forget the purpose of the Master, that all the world shall be filled with His glory and that daily shall He be praised.

The noon prayer will not necessitate a great break in the business of the day, but we can make a little space. In the Mission House in London where I spend most of the hours of the day, we have a noon bell rung, and everybody knows the meaning of it. We are called by it to five minutes' quiet prayer. When visitors are with us, I turn to them and say, "Will you join in prayer with us?"—and good people find they have urgent engagements, because they think we are about to have a meeting! But it is not that: we kneel down wherever we are. The echo of that bell has gone to the ends of the earth.

The noon call is a great call to prayer, however it reach us. We can find a sanctuary, however great the bustle round about us. Mr. M'Intyre tells of an old woman who could not find a quiet place for prayer, until she made the discovery that it was possible, amidst the commotion with which she was surrounded, to shut the world out and separate herself to God by throwing her apron over her head. You and I may invent other ways. I would suggest that if you should be going along the street, it is quite easy to stand at a window and pray. People will think you are

looking at the things in the windows. You can pray in the streets without being like a Pharisee, so as *not* to be seen of men. You can meet Christ everywhere—

See Him in the street,
  Serve Him in the shop,
Sow Him with thy wheat,
  House Him with thy crop,
Love and learn Him more
  As a common friend,
Joys thou thus shalt store
  For the happy end.

Now we advance three hours for the next watch, and we come to the afternoon. And if you would let me remind you of what happened at three o'clock in the afternoon, it might be a solemn time to every one of us. Christ died at three o'clock; and surely it would be fitting that we Christian people, whose hope is in the Cross, should in the recollectedness of the Holy Spirit, praise God for the Cross at three o'clock. As the three hours strike, we may think of the three things Christ did for us at Calvary: how He took our sins upon Him, and bore them on the tree, and settled them for ever. Some people say their sins were buried in the tomb: my sins did not get so far; they were settled on the Cross. Then I may praise God that I have been crucified with Christ; that not only did He settle the score between me and the divine holiness, but that I, too, have been crucified, so that now, though I live, it is yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me. And praise Him, too, that the Cross is to conquer the world. As Prince Henry the Navigator said, when his sailors talked of the conquests they would make: "This is nothing to me. Plant a Cross on some new headland: that is what I want." The Church must not rest till the Cross is planted on every headland; and three o'clock in the afternoon, I suggest, is the time to pray for its triumph in all the world.

Well, then, we come to the next watch, which is six o'clock in the evening. Now what shall we say about six o'clock—the time of rest? In the old days it was the time when the bell of recall sounded; the *Angelus* called from blessed labour to blessed rest. It should be the time when we put away all strife and wrath and bitterness and anger. But there is something else inexpressibly beautiful, to my mind, and it is set out for us by our Lord Himself in Luke 17. The passage runs like this, beginning at v. 7, "Which of you, having a servant ploughing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come out of the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have

eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do."

Here is a man who has been working hard all day in the field, just as you and I go out to our daily calling; and in the evening he comes in from field service. You say, "Oh, his day's toil is over!" That is man's way; but the Lord's is more gracious. The Master calls him now to house service. Of course, the Lord has other servants engaged all the time in the house, but it is for the benefit of the field servants that they should have some house service too. So when they come in tired and dusty from their toil, He says, "Gird yourselves and serve me." Now that is how we ought to behave to the Master when our secular day's work is done. The Lord is going to allow us to relax; but is the relaxation given after the service? Here He teaches us that there is something between the day's toil and our relaxation, and that something is holy fellowship with the Master Himself.

It is beautiful to think that you are serving the Master in the field, but it will be more beautiful to serve the Master in His own presence. You are to wait on Him; not that He needs your help, but He wants you to be near. If you went to your own meal at once, you would go in the garments that are stained, and sit down to your meal roughly; but you are going to serve the Master, and so you have to gird yourself. You serve Him, and listen to His talk, and you feel that you are helping Him; you have the joy of doing something direct for the Master at the close of the day's toil. He does not thank you; but when it is over, and you see what it has brought you, you will thank Him for it. You will see that when He was demanding something from you, He was bestowing something upon you. You will understand the Master better, and realise that He knows you more intimately. Then you may go and eat and drink, and there will be better viands on your table because the Master has feasted first; and you will eat and drink more delicately because you have served the Master.

If you want to know what relaxations are lawful for Christians, first go and have fellowship with the Master, and then go out and do what you like. There are many things you will not feel inclined to do after that; and there are some things you would have done otherwise, that you will do quite differently after it. The great thing is personal service to the Master, and to render it loyally; to hand Him something that will make His heart glad.

Sometimes it is good to sing a hymn to Jesus. To sing in the congregation is good: and I ask you to remember that the Christian congregation is the only congregation in the world that has common praise; but sometimes it is well to sing to the Master Himself, just a hymn for Christ's own ear. At six o'clock is the hour of the Master.

So we have gone round the twelve hours, and we have found five watches of prayer: at nine o'clock committing the day to the Lord; at twelve o'clock praying for the world; at three o'clock adoring at the foot of the Cross; at six o'clock holding fellowship with the Master, special fellowship with Him who is near all the time; at nine o'clock committing the night to the Master, quietly letting the softening influence of the evening give Christ's rest to our souls. But we began with the intentions of praising seven times a day and these are only five. Well then, there are two other hours, six o'clock in the morning, and twelve o'clock at night. I suppose most people who are awake at six o'clock in the morning will not be awake at twelve o'clock at night; and those who are awake at twelve will not be awake at six!

At six o'clock in the morning, when we waken, surely there is a very special call to prayer. It may be a sanctified hour. I am not speaking of the blessing that may come to us as we open the Word of God, but of direct fellowship between our souls and Christ, who is ever present with us. And what shall be the topic of prayer in the morning? Surely the Holy Spirit, who is like the dew. Mr. Spurgeon once wrote a beautiful morning hymn—

> When flowers are wet with dews,
> Dew of our souls descend;
> Ere yet the sun the day renews,
> O Lord, Thy Spirit send.

The thing we have to learn about the Holy Spirit, who is near us, with us, and in us, is that still He is to be received, is to be daily received; and that He is so sensitive that He will not consciously stay with us unless we definitely seek His presence. I said that our chief prayer is to be to the Father in heaven; but we shall not be wrong if we pray to the Spirit in the morning, and ask Him to be with us, and to reveal the glories of Christ during the day. There is an Indian hymn translated by William Carey's grandson, and harmonised in the haunting Bengali air by Carey Bonner; and the last verse runs like this—

> Show me Thy face at the dawn,
> Give me to see Thee at break of day,
> O Saviour King:

Show me Thy face at the dawn.
As the dew now softly falleth,
So refresh the soul that calleth,
Drop by drop Thy grace distilling, bless me,
O my Saviour King:
Show me Thy face at the dawn!

And when it comes to midnight, surely there is only one thing that can suggest itself to the Christian heart; and that is to pray for the coming of the bridegroom, for the glorious Advent; that we should hasten the day of the Lord. "At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh." And every midnight when I am awake I cry, "Even so, Amen." Is not the lodestar of your spirit, the goal of the Church, the hope of the world, the call of the universe, that He shall come? It is certain to be midnight somewhere. He tells us when it will be. He says there will be two men sleeping in a bed: it will be night there. And there will be two women grinding at a mill: it will be morning there. And two men shall be in the field: it will be midday there. When the Lord comes it will be all hours. But no matter what watch it may be by the clock, it will be black night when He comes to lighten our darkness; when we try in vain to help each other, Christ's glory will be seen. And every night we may pray, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." We cannot tell when He will come, but "blessed are those servants" He said "whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching." We have girded ourselves and served Him in the evening; but at that hour, "Verily I say unto you, He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down with Him, and go forth and serve them. And if He come in the second watch, or in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants."

So we have our seven watches: at six in the morning, with the thought of the Holy Spirit; at nine, when we may commit the day to the Lord; at noon, when we bring the world to His feet; at three, when we glory in the Cross; at six, we seek renewal of personal fellowship with the Master; at nine, we commit the night with all its possibilities into His hand; and at twelve, we ardently long for the glorious day that is coming.

But even then we shall not be content. There is still an interval unfilled. I know a man whose time is not in all those, but who at three o'clock in the morning wakes to hold communion with the Master, and spread out his wants before His face. If you are wakeful at three o'clock, think that it is the Lord who holds your eyes waking, and that perhaps He wants you to pray for His sleeping saints. It is delightful to think that the Lord has some waking saints to pray for the sleeping saints, and He has some who

can then pray for the sick and the mourners. And if we think at midnight of the Lord Jesus, and the nearness of His day; and in the morning of the blessed Spirit with His grace, surely at three o'clock we may think of the Holy Father with a heart as tender as one whom a mother comforteth, so He comforteth us. He has a special blessing for the watchful—

> He gives His angels charge of those who sleep,
> But He Himself watches with those who wake.

So the whole day may be filled with the glorious presence that makes life sweet; and we may realise that Christ is constantly by our side. At special times we may make our special spaces that will assure our weak and faltering hearts, that we may believe what is always the fact, and that we may realise more of His holy presence—

> I need not leave the jostling world,
> Nor wait till daily tasks are o'er,
> To fold my hands in secret prayer
> Within the close-shut closet door;
> There is a viewless cloistered room
> As high as heaven, as fair as day,
> Where, though my feet may join the throng,
> My soul may enter in and pray.

VIII

WE BEHELD HIS GLORY

by the

Rev. Alexander Smellie, D.D.

1919

DR. ALEXANDER SMELLIE

The minister of a small congregation of the Original Secession Church, in the little town of Carluke, twenty miles south-east of Glasgow, for twenty-three years before his Homecall in 1923, Dr. Alexander Smellie achieved world-wide fame by his writings. Not that he sought fame: he was truly one of the humblest of men. His notes on the daily portions of the International Bible Reading Association, however, were of surpassing excellence, literary and spiritual; and one at least of his books, *Men of the Covenant*, ranks among the religious classics.

A son of the manse, Alexander Smellie was born in Stranraer in 1857. In his godly home, it was regarded as presumption to claim assurance of salvation; so when D. L. Moody, after preaching a sermon on "one thing I know . . ." (John 9: 25), during his first mission in Edinburgh in 1874, came down from the pulpit and put his hand on a young student's shoulder and asked, "Do *you* know?" he replied, "I hope." That is the approved answer of stern Presbyterianism to such an enquiry. Before the evening was ended, however, Smellie *knew*. He later recalled how "through an American evangelist God spoke to a Seceder boy, who was looking forward already to the ministry of the Word, and dowered him with the humble certainty that all is well, which no minister of the Word can afford to be without." Years later, God met with him again, at Keswick, through the ministry of the Rev. Evan Hopkins, and "by an Evangelical Anglican God spoke to the condition of an Original Seceder." From that time onwards he became one of the most beloved of Keswick speakers.

"By native gifts, wide scholarship, and deep devotion," wrote Dr. W. Y. Fullerton, in an obituary tribute, "Alexander Smellie was one of the greatest men of his day, fitted to stand in the front rank; yet he elected to stay with his own people in the Original Secession Church of Scotland, even when he was invited to high places in other churches. . . . During recent years he had been one of the most welcome leaders at the Keswick Convention; the series of Bible Readings he gave in 1919 on the glory of Jesus will never be forgotten by those who heard them . . ."

Regarding those Bible Readings—here reproduced—Mr. J. Kennedy Maclean, then Editor of *The Life of Faith*, wrote: "Dr. Smellie's own face shone as he unfolded to us the loveliness of his Master. . . . We saw our Lord as we had never seen Him before—infinitely more beautiful and loving; and like Thomas, we could only fall in adoration at His blessed feet and exclaim, 'My Lord and my God'."

The Rev. J. Russell Howden wrote of him: "Brought up, as he was

wont to say, in the straitest sect of Scottish Presbyterianism, his great gifts might have won for him a foremost place in any part of the Church of God. But he knew something of the beautiful loyalty to his father's memory, which held him faithful to the Original Secession. Yet his loving heart went out to all who loved his Lord. And the Secession nobly did not begrudge him to the larger ministry for all the Lord's people.

"And how God used him there! . . . I can see him now, standing up in the tent in a characteristic attitude, one hand in the side pocket of his jacket, with his open Bible on the desk before him, without a note or extraneous help of any kind, just pouring forth the treasures of God's Word which he loved, presenting them with the freshness and vividness of his richly-stored mind.

"The quiet Scottish voice swept over our hearts like the wind over the trees of the wood. Sometimes it seemed as if the heavens were about to open, and we were about to behold with bodily eyes the Lord whom the disciples loved to exalt. You forgot the speaker; and no one can say a greater thing than that about any man . . ."

This observation regarding Dr. Smellie's speaking "without a note or extraneous help of any kind" needs to be amplified by the fact that it was his practice to write out his addresses fully, and memorise them. This explains their orderly manner of presentation and polished literary style.

One final tribute comes from the pen of Dr. W. Graham Scroggie: "He was, perhaps, the greatest devotional writer of this generation; and by reason of his catholicity of outlook, his spiritual penetration, the literary force and beauty of his style, together with the simplicity and profoundness of his thought, he was read in all sections of the Christian Church, and was loved as widely as he was read."

This, then, is the "man of the Covenant" who, in these Bible Readings, being dead yet speaketh.

I

THE PRE-EXISTENCE

Glory as of an Only Begotten from a Father—John 1: 14.

A man is known, the proverb says, by the company that he keeps. John the apostle, who was on the border of eternity when he penned the Gospel which bears his name, had been living for many years in the company of one surpassing Person—Jesus Christ, his Saviour, his Lord, and his Friend. For three summers, when he was young, he looked daily into Christ's face, he hearkened to the tones of His voice, he walked and talked with Him in the fields of Galilee and the streets of Jerusalem; his own hands were permitted to handle the Word of life. Then, for half a century and more, Christ had been away from the sight of his eyes and the hearing of his ears, back in the Father's house which He forsook for John's sake and the sake of a sinning and dying world. But from the outset, and all through, until he wrote those astonishing chapters, it was the same with the Apostle. Christ absorbed him, possessed him, drew him; and he followed on. His mind and heart closed round Christ, leaving little room for other studies and inferior loves. That one face, far from vanishing, rather grew.

There were the three initial years. You scarcely have an echo in them of John's speeches, or a glimpse into John's activities. He is silent as to himself, because he is busy listening to his Master. He is obliterated, because Jesus is all. Peter is enamoured of Jesus too, and worships at His feet; but Peter has not yet lost altogether the memory of himself; he rushes into the story with that impulsive dialect of his, and those assertive energies and plans —it is the Lord and Peter figuring side by side. John is different. His name is cancelled. He has crossed himself out. He is nothing. No man save Jesus only occupies the canvas; and John reads wonders and magnitudes and sufficiences and an exceeding grace in Jesus, which outrun Peter's conceptions and dreams. And the succeeding half-century, since Christ ascended while John tarried until his Master should come again for him—what was it but a long-sustained contemplation of his Lord, a deepening reverence,

an increasing intimacy, a sacred and boundless delight? Dante pictures the procession of the saints—

> Behind them all,
> One single old man, sleeping as he moved,
> With a shrewd visage.

"Sleeping" and "shrewd"; there is John. He broods, meditates, ponders; he loses himself in Christ through the day and through the night. But his is the opposite of a vague and idle quietism. No intellect is keener and more alert, and no results are vaster and more unmistakable. If he pursues the divine vision, he grasps the vision also, as completely as the soul of man can grasp it; and he tells others what it means. Yes, a man is judged and understood by the company he keeps; and would that you and I kept the best company as constantly and confidingly as the beloved apostle did!

One dominated by such convictions, and by a devotion so consuming, is likely to have his own language. He will not borrow his accent and idiom from anyone else. He looks into his heart and speaks. Sir Edward Cook discusses the charm and power of Ruskin's writing, the significance and the opulence which mark his prose, the secrets of his mastery. "At bottom," he concludes, "it comes to this: that he had something to say, that he said it in the way that was natural to him, and that nature had endowed him with exquisite sensibility. The style was the man." So with John, but in a degree much higher and a measure much more ample. He had something to say, something unmatchable, strange and sweet and solemn. He said it in the way that was natural to him—the way of the seer and the theologian, the discoverer and the mystic, "sleeping" but "shrewd." And nature had endowed him with an exquisite sensibility; but not nature merely or mainly, for its equipment would have been quite inadequate—the grace of God and the quickening illumination of the Holy Spirit behind and above nature, inter-penetrating it through and through, and subliming it to altitudes it had not otherwise attained. With John, also, the style is the man. He utters his thoughts of the Lord, his first and midst and last, characteristically, individually, and after his own special fashion.

One remarks this very plainly, that he has not a wide and copious vocabulary: there is no torrential flood of words; the words are fit and few. He is not afraid to repeat his favourites among them; he repeats them of set and deliberate purpose. Nouns like "light" and "life" and "witness," "the world," and "the truth"; verbs like "to believe" and "to know" never lose

their interest for him, and are reiterated again and again. They carry in their apparent simplicity an extraordinary intrinsic wealth. They are not notions, so much as facts. Each is a piece of gold; and the gold is that of fairyland, which has magical uses and values; rather let us say, it is the gold of the Kingdom of heaven, and the endlessness of its worth can never be computed.

I have thought, I trust under God's prompting, that we may, humbly and profitably, look at one of St. John's distinctive words, as he employs it of the Person who was all the world to him. He keeps for Jesus Christ the noun "glory," and the verb "to glorify" or "to be glorified." Forty-two times, says M. Godet, the devout Swiss commentator, he diadems his Lord with the far-flashing words. Forty-two times!—from such a galaxy of stars we can only select here and there some shining instances. Perhaps we may gather them into four groups or constellations, with Christ as the central sun in each of the four. There is, to start with, the glory of the pre-existence. It is followed by the glory of the ministry. That leads on to the amazing glory of the cross. And, as the climax and coronation of all, there is the glory of the reward.

First, let us stand, reverent and adoring, in the temple which is dark with excess of bright, to survey the Lord who sits on its throne, high and lifted up. Seraphim veil their faces and feet before Him; and we, who are dust and ashes, who are foolishness and sin, cannot bow low enough in the august and awful presence. But this God is our God for ever and ever. He is our Saviour from His untrackable past. We are comforted, as well as condemned, by *the Glory of the Pre-existence.*

"Glory" is indeed God's own word. It belongs to Him. He challenges an indefeasible right to it. It is His property—a plot of ground which, in large measure at least, He has fenced about for Himself. Of course, there is a glory which is human. But frequently it is—

> A hollow thing,
> A lie, a vanity,
> Tinsel and paint.

It is the simulacrum, the counterfeit, the image and the mask, but not the reality. It is that *vainglory of life*, in one guise or another, of which John writes in his Epistle, and which he is sure will soon pass utterly away. And where the human glory is of a better sort, it is not inherent but derived; it comes down from above, from the Father of all lights and glories; it is that reflection of the radiance of God which, the rabbis said, gleamed and sparkled in the features of Adam in his innocence, and was the

first among the six ethereal things he lost in his fall, but which sometimes we find restored in the looks and lineaments of those whom Christ has saved, and is saving more and more: "a redeemed man," James Smetham protests, and I hope we agree, "is a resplendent thing to meet in a lane, or in a parlour, or anywhere—your brother whom you have seen." But, originally and in its noblest compass, glory is God's word. John was recalling this when he took it and annexed it, emphatically and consistently, to Christ. He was, in clearest consciousness of what he was doing, and with definite design, giving to Christ something which, properly and essentially, is God's, and is no other's.

The Old Testament, on which the apostle had nurtured his soul from childhood, is filled with the idea of the glory of Jehovah. In law and prophecy and psalm, the phrase is a synonym for Jehovah's revealed character and being. His greatness, His manifestation of Himself in history, His marvellous works, His rounded and incomparable perfection. It is the combination of qualities making up His transcendence—not His power alone, nor His righteousness alone, nor His gentleness alone, but all of them wedded in a peerless marriage and unity. Moreover, it is this combination of qualities disclosed and rendered evident, in luminous vision, in fiery brightness. The glory of God is not hidden entirely from the scrutiny of men. It is not an abstract and academic doctrine, which the mind may investigate, and the heart may feed upon, but which never leaps forth into the open, from behind the curtain of the skies, and out of the distant chambers and deeps which are its native abode.

On the contrary, it is the unveiling of God. It is a theophany, a splendour, the majesty of the Lord of which men and women are spectators. It lingers in the pillar of the Shekinah over the Tabernacle, and the congregation watches it there. Moses prays that it may be shown to him, and he beholds its back parts and hears Jehovah proclaim His name, *The Lord God, merciful and gracious.* In the year that King Uzziah died, the young Isaiah is convicted by its pure white light of his own uncleanness, and then is told, "*Thy sin is purged*"; the holy love of God is Isaiah's lesson in the heavenly glory. At a later day, beside the river Chebar, Ezekiel gazes on the living creatures, and the rushing wheels, and the eyes that search every corner, above and below, near and far; and so has burned into him the glory of God's vigilance and activity and all-embracing government and reign. Thus, by divers portions and in divers manners, Jehovah revealed to the fathers of the Jewish people the miracle of His being—that there is none like Him, "most high, most good, most powerful, most almighty; most merciful, yet most just; most beautiful, yet

most strong; unchangeable, yet changing all things; never new, and never old; ever in action, yet ever at rest" (Augustine, *Confessions*, 1, 4).

What if, even in the ancient time, the revelation came always through Jesus, who is habitually the *Logos*, word and outgoing and expression of the invisible God? Was it Jesus who tarried in conversation with Moses for those ineffable minutes among the rocks of Sinai; Jesus, who abased Isaiah to the dust, and lifted him to sonship and communion and consecration; Jesus, who bade Ezekiel be certain that above the voice of many waters the Lord on high is mighty? The divines of two and three centuries ago loved to teach that every apocalypse of God in the Old Testament was a brief appearance, a passing visit, of Christ, before the fullness of the time had come, and He emptied Himself, and was born in Bethlehem—born to grant us not a fitful but a steadfast presence; "a sojourn," as Calvin puts it, "and not a theophany" any more; and I like to think that these divines were right. This much, at any rate, is beyond dispute; that, when John attaches to Jesus the great attribute of glory, he gives Him that which is God's, the light that never was on sea or land, the character which no mere man since the world began has had or can have. Out of pre-existent Deity, and trailing the clouds of Jehovah's glory with Him from His early home, He descends who is your Redeemer and mine. Lo, this is our God, and we have waited for Him. What else, whom else, do we need? What helper and healer, deliverer and lord, can compare with Jesus Christ?

But John has his illustrations of a word which, in itself, signifies so much. He dips his sounding line down, once, twice, thrice, into the unfathomed and unplumbed depths of the pre-existence of our Saviour.

Consider, he says first, how Christ's is *the glory of a singular kinship*. He is related to God in a manner which is unprecedented and solitary. *Glory as of an only-begotten from a Father*—that is the apostle's account of it (1 John 1: 14). A mystery this, which we dare not attempt to solve. It carries up, up and up to the third heaven. It takes us behind the veil into the Most Holy Place. Father and Son are alone; a tie binds them which saints and angels do not share; the divine nature which is in the First Person passes undiminished into the Second Person; the communication of its powers and its blessednesses is without limit, without stint, without hindrance, overflowing and free. "They had him into the study," Bunyan narrates of his Pilgrim, "where they showed him records of the greatest antiquity; in which, as I remember my dream, they showed him first the Pedigree of the Lord of the Hill, that He was the Son of the Ancient of Days and

came by an eternal generation." The Son of the Ancient of Days who comes by an eternal generation, the Fellow and the Equal of God, the only-born—that is our Christ. His oneness with the Father is unique, has ever been so, and will remain so through all the future, to the ages of the ages.

Well it is for us that it is unique. Because Christ is the pre-eminent Son, He is invested with the authority and the ability, the right and the resource, to constitute us children; and we become what we were not before, partakers of the life of God. His singular kinship is guarantee of the kinship to which He loves to introduce us—a genuine kinship, a transfiguring and intimate relation, a child-rank and a child-nature not of this earth, but most truly divine, even if we may not speak of them as just in the same superlative and super-human category with His own. The only-begotten, who is without partner or comrade or rival, is also, and rejoices to be, the First-born among many brethren (Rom. 8: 29; Col. 1: 15).

And consider, John says again, how Christ's is *the glory of an unbeginning life*. We read, in the eighth chapter of the Gospel, of an hour—there were many such—when the Jews were in sharp conflict with Jesus. They resented His pretensions. *If anyone keep my word*, He had been declaring, *he shall not taste of death for ever* (John 8: 57–58). What a fantastic impossibility it seemed! What a cruel falsity! Why, Abraham, the mighty founder of their nation, was dead long since, and his bones were dust; and was this obscure teacher of Nazareth greater than Abraham? But Jesus replied quietly, as was His custom, "*I do not glorify myself*, in obedience to impulses of my own; there is no glory in self-praise; and I have no need to resort to it—I can appeal for my vindication to the absolute tribunal: *There is my Father to glorify me*, my Father whom you regard and name *your God*."

Then He turned to their allusion to Abraham and gave it surprising meanings, portraying Abraham as the eager and the convinced watcher for Himself. "Abraham exulted rapturously in the expectation of seeing my day, and he saw it, and was calmed into firm and restful gladness." Perhaps when he ventured out, not knowing whither he went; perhaps when he accepted, in naked faith, the promises of a seed and of a land; perhaps when he laid his boy upon the altar, accounting that God is able to raise up even from the dead; perhaps from where he continued to live in the Paradise of the Lord, whom he trusted and served: his eyes were opened, and he beheld the Word of God made flesh, and he greeted Christ from afar. But, in truth, Christ had been with him through all the years of his quest and aspiration and desire—nay, had anticipated and forestalled him, long ere the

quest, the aspiration, and the desire were awakened in his soul; ay, long ere he had any conscious life in the world of men. For *before Abraham was born and came to be*, Jesus went on, *I am.*

Simple words, and incalculable words! Abraham entered into existence; Christ never entered. Yesterday, today, and for ever, He is, in a present which is timeless, and which had no point of commencement as it will have no moment of termination. Such an eternity is "darkness to our intellect," but it is "sunshine to our heart." It helps us to realise how the believers of the older and dimmer days could reach their faith, their peace, their holiness, and their fruit-bearing. He was operative under the surface of things, constraining them to Himself. Before men saw Him face to face, they were cheered by the premonition that already He was on the way. "God's manifestations are not sudden," Dr. A. B. Davidson says; "outposts and skirmishes precede the array of the Lord of Hosts." And, for ourselves, there is strong consolation in the timeless pre-existence of our Lord. The blessing He devised for us before Abraham was, and before the worlds were, is not subject to the vicissitudes, the changes, and the decays of time. It comes out of the tranquillity and abidingness of an everlasting realm. It is permanent. It will endure when the great globe shall dissolve. It can never be shaken.

Consider, John says once more, how Christ's is *the glory of a perfect affection.* "My glory," we overhear Him repeating in His High-Priestly prayer; and immediately He adds His explanation of the phrase: *For Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world* (John 17: 24). Glory, in the dictionary of Christ, is love; the love of God for Him, the love unbroken and unbreakable which had knit together the Father and the Son through the revolving cycles of Their eternal past. He covets no other glory, He can imagine no other, than this consummate love; for Jesus—

> There is nothing out of love hath perpetual worth.

It is the road by which we shall best mount to our conception of the Trinity—the road not of the brain but of the heart, and of sympathy rather than of speculation. God is, and has always been, One in Three, and Three in One, because God is, and has always been, love. "Ere suns and moons could wax and wane," Father and Son and Spirit were the perfect lovers—their union and communion a joy unspeakable to Themselves, and full of glory. How far more winning is our God than the lonely and unfigured despot of the Moslem, and than the chilling and austere king and potentate of Arian and Unitarian! And how sure the pre-existence of love makes our redemption! A Lord who has been

nurtured in its ardours and fervours, from the beginning which has no beginning, is bound to compassionate us, to seek us, and to find us. The Father will send Him, *for the Father Himself loveth us*; and He will be swift and resolute to come. And having come, and having bought us with His blood, and having led us to Himself, He will not be content till He has finished for us and in us His good work. The affection He cherishes toward our helpless souls is nothing less than the fire-flame of Jehovah. It has been glowing in His breast, "ere stars were thunder-girt or piled the heavens." Many waters cannot quench it. Our own weaknesses and unworthinesses beat against it in vain. It will not fail nor be discouraged, until it has translated us into something like its own heat and passion, and has perfected that which concerns us.

That is the glory of Christ's pre-existence. We have touched only its outermost fringes, like the woman in the Capernaum crowd who placed a trembling finger on the blue hem of the Lord's garment: what more can we do? But for us, as for her, to touch the glory is to be cured of our plague; virtue passes out of it, and out of Him whose it is, and we are every whit whole.

For the divinity and the eternity of Christ have intensely practical issues. We forfeit our lives, we shipwreck ourselves, when we dispense with them. If we are to be recovered and renewed—recovered and renewed in our lightest part and our deepest being—it seems undeniable that it must be by Someone, in and through whom God is working. He is not to be a mere agent or messenger. He is to be a real Mediator, who can have a real effect on the quarrel, and who can make a real contribution of His own to the settling of it. No sinner can do those things, and no creature can, even the most exalted and the most sinless of creatures. One must do it, who is God as well as Man. If He is exclusively God, He will not lay hold on us nor lead us captive; but if He is less than God, by so much as an archangel is less, or the saintliest of the saints, He will not adequately represent God, and He is not strong enough and wise enough and loving enough to bear the burden of the stupendous enterprise. It is Immanuel, the pre-existent God condescending to be *God with us*, who must stir up His strength and come for our redemption. And since He is Immanuel, we shall harbour no doubts of His power, and we shall receive from Him no meagre salvation, but a salvation which creates anew our whole spirit and soul and body, and which goes on expanding and multiplying through all the days, even unto the end.

II

THE MINISTRY

I have glorified Thee on the earth—JOHN 17: 4.

OUT of purest love for God and for men, the Christ of the Pre-existence became, in the fullness of time, the Christ of the Ministry. He laid aside His crown and sceptre. He veiled His eternal majesty in the frailties of our human flesh. It is true that St. John never forgets, or suffers us to forget, the unearthliness of his Lord. "The Johannine picture of Christ," says Dr. Hugh Mackintosh, "makes on the reader's mind an impression of harmonious and sublime transcendence." This is plain and evident God who lives and moves among us, we feel as we read. Yet He is plain and evident and very Man, our Brother, one of ourselves. John will not let any dividing gulf, or shallowest streamlet, sunder Christ from our society. He is wearied at Jacob's well; He weeps beside the grave of Lazarus; He looks forward to the Cross now with instinctive shrinking and now with passionate desire; He is thirsty on Calvary; He bears in His hands and feet and side, after His resurrection, the marks of the spear and the nails. If, as Thomas Aquinas expresses it enigmatically and finely, "He came forth from but did not leave the Bosom of God," He is always and everywhere the Kinsman of the children, wayward and prodigal children although they are. There were stoics in the first century, too self-contained, too loftily detached from the world's unrest and pain and yearning and tenderness, too proud in their aloofness and apathy, to appreciate a Lord who stooped to carry the sickness and infirmities of men. There were Docetists, to whom the humanity of Jesus, the Son of God, was unbelievable, an abasement and degradation of the divine nature. But John has not a shred of sympathy with Docetists and Stoics. He counters their errors with his great affirmations of a Jesus Christ who is not a phantom or an idea, but a Man come in the flesh—a Jesus Christ like unto His brethren in everything except their sins, bone of our bone, and soul of our soul.

This glory—the glory of Him who is True God and Perfect

Man and One Christ—as it is to be seen in the three years' ministry: this is our theme at present.

The Ministry is a Glory of the Surrendered Will.

Again and again John, quoting his Lord, or reflecting upon his Lord, has the designation for Christ, *He that came down from heaven* (John 3: 13). "Came down"—it is an eloquent and poignant adverb. From riches to poverty; from the endowments of Godhead to a lowly life under creature-conditions; from an unshaded communion with God to a communion less immediate, a praying from a far land, a cry once at least from the depths of a forsaken and orphaned heart: the King of kings and the Son of sons "came down." There was an untrammelled willinghood in the coming. Jesus chose without reluctance and with alacrity what Ralph Erskine calls His "perilous road"—the road which led Him through the water and through the blood. But in the Fourth Gospel it is not His own willinghood on which He insists; it is His subordination to the purpose and commandment of God. *The living Father hath sent me* (John 6: 57)—that is the conviction He repeats in varying forms. *I can do nothing of myself* (John 8: 28), He tells us in the meekness and quietness of His spirit. If at one moment He makes the fearless claim, *I and the Father are One* (John 10: 30), at another moment He shows us with equal explicitness the side of dependence and submission, *the Father is greater than I* (John 14: 28), and the second word, not less than the first, is essential to the whole truth. This Son not only learns obedience, but finds His meat and drink, His good pleasure and His joy, in learning it.

It was so, no doubt, in His pre-existence, and in the Godhead and glory that were not concealed and covered at all. To be a Son, although it is an Only Begotten and Everlasting Son, is to be filial, reverential, attentive, to the Father's summons and dedicated to the Father's service. Like the angel whom Robert Browning paints, Christ—

> did God's will; to Him, all one
> If on the earth or in the sun.

Within the high courts of heaven, as in the little house at Nazareth, and among the lanes of Galilee, and in the Temple chambers on the hill of Zion, and at the sorrowful place called Calvary, God was the passion of His heart, and He ran God's errands, and lived for God's praise. But there was something in His incarnate life—a condescension, an abnegation, an uttermost self-emptying—which passed beyond the steadfast and sustained Sonship of the upper country. Few have written about Christ more understandingly than Martin Luther; he practised his own rule, "Wilt

thou go surely and meet and grasp God rightly, so finding grace and help in Him? Let thine art and study begin with Christ, and there let it stay and cling"; but now and then Luther speaks unadvisedly. He does so when he says, "It was not humiliation for the Son of God to become flesh; it was honour." The New Testament views it otherwise. It pronounces it humiliation, veritable, outright. But then it is humiliation accepted lovingly and with thanksgiving. Christ's ministry is the glory of the surrendered will.

And, one by one, we should covet to plant our foot where the Master has left the print of His shoe. There is no introduction to the family for you and me, till our will submits to God's. It is not that either at the beginning or afterwards, we are automata and lay-figures; He has little liking for automata, and little room in His household for lay-figures; His children are reasonable and responsible men and women, with decisions and determinations of their own. But they are men and women who have taken, and are perpetually taking, their decisions and determinations, to yield them up to Him. Some of these plans and predilections and energies of ours—and here we part company from Christ—will have to be entirely reversed and overthrown. All of them—and Christ is not in this category either—stand in need of God's amendment and renovation, purging and hallowing. But, whatever their character, we bring them to Him, we put them and ourselves at His disposal, we ask Him to employ them and us for Himself alone; and now we are in the fellowship of the Son whom *the Father sanctified and sent into the world* (John 10: 36), and who was heartily willing to be sanctified and sent. "The education I advocate," said Michael Faraday at the Royal Institution, "has for its first and last step humility." That is the spiritual education for us, its last step humility as confessedly as its first; and thus, we too, shall know the glory of the surrendered will.

Moreover, *the Ministry is a Glory of the Radiant Walk.*

He that seeketh the glory of Him that sent Him, said Jesus once to the captious and carping Jews, *the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him* (John 7: 18). Find me a man, it was as if He declared, who has never a thought of personal advantage, but to whom God is morning star and evening star and commencement and course and goal; and he is a true man from centre to circumference, with no trace or taint of unrighteousness in him. Well, it is the Christian's aspiration to be such a man; our chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever. But the best of us is only moving, under divine training, toward this peerless manhood. We have not yet attained; Christ has arrived. Our desires to live and die for God's glory are not desires in Him; they are realisations and

facts. He may be said to be the only One of His class; for all who belong to the class belong to it in virtue of receiving from Him His succour, His strength, and His Spirit. This is His radiant walk. He pursues, without wavering or turning aside, the noblest purpose. He lives to advance and to adorn His Father's name and fame. He "intends to get to God, and 'tis to God He speeds so fast."

Or we become aware of the radiance along another line. Pascal somewhere remarks that he is the highest type of man, in whom complementary and apparently contradictory qualities are joined in agreement; and, in an unapproachable degree, this was the case with Christ. "He pitched His tent among us," John says; "He took up His abode; and we never saw His like; for He was full of grace and truth" (John 1: 14). Grace and truth! The gentleness that is unfailing; the charm that is exquisite; the kindness that has no cause except its own spontaneity and fullness; the love that does not wait for our love, but forgives and upholds and hopes and endures in spite of all ill-desert and all disappointment; that, on the one hand. And this, on the other: the light in which is no darkness at all, nor plausibility, nor falsehood; the holiness which will not tolerate so much as the suggestion of evil, but thinks habitually on what is venerable and just and pure; the very unity, inward and outward, of the life of God. Grace and truth, goodness and severity, righteousness to condemn and mercy to restore, the light that exposes and the love that heals—these pitched their tent in Palestine when Jesus tabernacled there; they lodged in unruffled concord within His breast; and when, guilty, lost and helpless in ourselves, we fall into His arms, not once merely, but every day, it is our salvation to discover both in Him, and to have both active and busy on our behalf. The walk is radiant, for it is the walk of One whose perfection has many sides.

Of One, further, whose perfection is never soiled. *Which of you convicteth me of sin?* (John 8: 46) we hear Christ ask those lynx-eyed opponents of His; and the keenest and most pitiless of them cannot do it. It is more wonderful that He cannot do it Himself. A conscience so acute as His must have detected the smallest blot on His own escutcheon, and a heart so sensitive would have felt the bitterest grief over it. But there is no detection, and there is no grief. Christ has not a scar to be cured, nor the recollection of a single defeat in the moral and spiritual war over which to mourn. He stands unafraid before the God who is a consuming fire. He is holy and harmless, and undefiled.

We see the radiance of the walk; and it is our cordial and reinforcement to see it. It is not only that a tarnished Redeemer would be fatally incapacitated for the enterprise of leading us

into life and godliness, having his own faults and failures to concern him. But it is that an untarnished Redeemer, who has been tempted as we are without once succumbing to temptation, can aid us most and best. He knows the possibilities, the subtleties, the fascinations of evil, and can compassionate us who know them. He overcame them, and therefore has the skill and power to provide for us the way of escape and victory. A sinner is an ill judge of sin. He regards it either with an unrelieved repulsion and horror, or with a fond partiality, or with a hard callousness that thinks it a matter of course. It is your Lord and mine, walking unsullied and radiant through a world of sin, who is able and who is willing to break our every chain.

Again, *the Ministry is a Glory of the Satisfying Word.*

The discourse of Christ in the Gospel of St. John—His discourse in public and in private—*it is spirit and it is life* (John 6: 36). Never man spake, or speaks, like this Man.

His word is certain. Weakness is not in it. It is confident. He knows the truth, and rings it forth with conclusiveness. We put in provisos; we safeguard our utterances, lest they should prove misleading or only partially trustworthy; we hesitate to commit ourselves. And this is disheartening to those who listen; for, as John Foster says, "Men want to feel, 'Yes, it is so! It must be so! That at least is settled to all eternity!'" Christ is different. The undertones of dubiety are absent from His teaching. It is all priceless, and it is all stable and unshakeable. John is the one evangelist who lets us hear the Master preluding His sayings with the double *Amen!*—the solemn *Verily, Verily!* Some twenty-five times we come on the establishing and confirming preface; and how grateful we are for it. It is the guarantee to our troubled minds that Christ's word is not "Yea and Nay," but "Yea" beyond recall. I read a criticism the other day of Walt Whitman. The critic said that, as the American singer tries to shout himself into poetry, so he tries to shout himself into faith and joy; but, behind the shouting, the fear lurks lest he should break down if he stops and thinks. He resolves what he will believe, and with an obstinate "will-to-power" he carries out his resolve. He says to himself and to everybody, "Thy sins be forgiven thee"; but the question obtrudes and will not be laid to sleep, Are they forgiven after all? "Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all that is not my soul," he publishes it often enough and loudly enough; but is it true? Ah, yes, is it true?—and so many of our valiant protestations have to be followed by the wistful and disquieting note of interrogation. But there need be no note of interrogation, when we hearken to Christ speaking. The glory of certainty is in His word.

And His word is as sufficient as it is certain. It is *a tried stone, a sure foundation.* We rest on it, and it blesses us today and tomorrow and for ever. You remember the seven *I AMs* of our Lord in this Gospel: *I am the Bread of life; I am the Light of the world; I am the Door of the sheep; I am the Good Shepherd; I am the Resurrection and the Life; I am the true and living Way; I am the true Vine* (John 6: 35; 8: 12; 10: 7; 10: 11; 11: 25; 14: 6; 15: 11). And having remembered them, and considered each separately, and looked long and deeply into the strength and the wealth and the amplitude of each, you are taught of the Holy Spirit to take them home to yourselves, and to discern in Jesus your Bread and your Light, the Doorway for you into all desirable things, the Shepherd Beautiful who leads you in green pastures and beside quiet waters, the Resurrection now and here for you from every bondage of death, the open Way to the Father, and the Vine whose sap and nutriment flow through you and render you fruitful. You do this in meditation, in prayer, and in faith, week in and week out; and what more can you wish or seek? You have all, and abound. We read Christ's sayings, and we cry with Bernard: "I hear not Moses now; to me he is of stammering tongue. Isaiah's lips are unclean. Jeremiah cannot speak; he is a child. He, He Himself, of whom they speak—He shall speak with me." The glory of sufficiency is in the word of Christ.

And His word is as accessible as it is sufficient. We travel through John's initial chapters, and it is a word of welcome for all sorts of people. There are the first disciples—the fiery young son of Zebedee himself, and patient plodding Andrew, and Simon Peter, and James, and Philip, and Nathaniel. There is Nicodemus, with his gravity, his caution, his erudition, his "system of theology in which," as one has put it, "there was no place for the Holy Ghost." There is the woman of Samaria, volatile, pleasure-loving, more than half pagan, frankly sinful. Christ has His characteristic greeting and characteristic redemption for each. We may be quite convinced that He can and will speak to our condition. And that being so, our part is three-fold. First, we receive His word with teachable souls. Then we keep returning to His word, till it dwells in us richly, and we cannot do without it. And, once more, we ourselves speak His word; for there is not a heart it cannot renew nor a wilderness it cannot fertilise. Some years ago, an English nobleman, captain of a man-of-war, was brought to Christ. He was not slow to confess the change. "I want to speak to you," he would say to an officer on board his ship; "I can assure you it's a great thing to know your sins forgiven." In his club, he would address its members with an appealing courtesy: "Excuse me, you may not have given attention to the

subject, but I have found Christ, and it has filled me with joy." So he continued for six or seven months, and then, suddenly, his Lord bade him *Come up higher.* God make us similar ambassadors of the satisfying Word, and of Him whose it is.

Finally, *the Ministry is a Glory of the Life-giving Work.*

When Peter preached to Cornelius, he compressed into two graphic words the short bright course of Christ on earth, the words *He went right through, doing good* (Greek, Acts 10: 38). John, also, watches Christ "go right through, doing good." He selects eight typical miracles of the Lord, seven in the three years' ministry, one in the forty days of the Resurrection; and these miracles he entitles "signs." They were more than marvels. They were tokens of the inflowing of the grace of God into our fallen world. They demonstrate the great things He is prepared to do for us.

In the first of the seven signs of the ministry, Jesus *manifested His glory* (John 2: 11); and of the last, that stupendous sign at the sepulchre in Bethany, we hear Him say, *This sickness is for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby* (John 11: 4). From Cana to the foot of Calvary, glory attends the life-giving work of Christ.

And invariably the glory is a sign—a message of the transfiguration He can and will accomplish for ourselves. He changed water into wine (John 2: 1–11), and He kindles our life from commonness into worth, making the ordinary rare and valuable. We complain that our corner is narrow, our duty monotonous, our influence small. But let Him sup with us in our poor and rustic and provincial Cana, and a new colour will suffuse our history, a new effectiveness attach to ourselves. He healed the nobleman's son, compelling the father to confide in His bare and unaccompanied word (John 4: 46–54), and He breathes into our life the invigorating air of testing and trust. Till our faith leans implicitly on His promise and Himself. Till we recognise that we are braced, and not harmed, when we are tossed to His breast by wants He alone can meet. He made the sick man at the Pool of Bethesda every whit whole (John 5: 2–9), and He lifts our life above the helplessness of sin. We look to Him, and live looking, and the disablement of the weary and barren years is terminated, and in His grace and Spirit we are more than conquerors. He fed the multitude in the desert (John 6: 4–14), and He fills our life with His supply. For both soul and body He has the adequate provision; and in what we feared was to be a wilderness, and with a few loaves and fishes, He spreads for us a Paschal sacrament and a royal feast. He stilled the storm on the lake and in the hearts of the disciples (John 6: 16–21), and He gives the tempests of our life a charge to befriend us. Through the tumult of our

sorrow, and in the dark night of our conscious feebleness, He draws near with a special benediction. He opened the eyes of him who was born blind (John 11: 1–7), and He diadems our life with light. Light of knowledge, as He conducts us into widening regions of truth. Light of holiness, as more and more He fashions us into His own likeness. Light of deepening peace and heightening joy. He *cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth, and he that was dead came forth* (John 11: 38–44); and He carries our life on and up to deathlessness and to Himself. Whether we rise to meet Him in the air, or journey "by way of the valleys" to see His face, we shall be with Him to behold His glory.

What a life-giving work He achieves! In the Acts of the Martyrs—the martyrs whom Imperial Rome chased through persecution to Christ Himself—there is the tale of a woman named Quartillosia. Her husband and her son had borne the good confession before her, and she was waiting in her cell for the hour of her own release. And one night she had a dream. She thought that a young man surpassingly tall entered the cell, the young Man Jesus Christ. He had a bowl of milk in His hand, and He gave her to drink. And she fancied that the great stone which divided the single window of the dungeon into two, and shut out the sky, was removed, and the full face of the sun looked in upon her. So Christ refreshes all our thirst, and takes away all our hindrances and obscurations, and shows us the Sun above the brightness of the sun.

Such is the glory of His life-giving work. And every aspect of it is for us, if we will claim and receive and enjoy.

We may trust Him fully,
All for us to do;
They that trust Him wholly,
Find Him wholly true.

III

THE CROSS

Now is the Son of Man glorified—John 13: 31.

Very strange, when we come upon it first, and think of the circumstances in which it was spoken, seems this *Now* of Jesus Christ. *Now*, when the next happening will be the betrayal under the olive trees in the Garden; *now*, when everything is in readiness for the tragedy of Calvary; *now*, that the hostile human wills are on the verge of success; *now*, since Judas has gone out into his congenial element of the "night," and will soon have taken the step which is irrevocable—*now*, as never before, in the most indisputable sense, *is the Son of Man glorified*. The paradox of this "now"—its apparent contradiction, and yet its perfect timeliness and truth—is our new subject. We have reached the place where the Cross stands, and we are to ponder the glory of the place.

Many have failed to detect the glory. They have fastened attention upon Christ's *now*, only on its sorrowful and painful side, or on its humiliating and disastrous side, or on its side of sheer absurdity and impossibility. A suffering Redeemer, a Lord whose one way to please God and to bless men was the dolorous way, was an offence in the early years, and remains for numbers an offence still. He was, and is, a problem too difficult for the mind, an acid test too distasteful for the will. To the Jews, Paul says, a crucified Christ was *a stumbling block*, a positive scandal. Now the Jew asked, could a criminal, dying under alien law on a scaffold kept for the discredited, the defeated, and the doomed, be the Messiah of his hopes and prayers? And to the Greeks, the apostle continues, the Cross was *foolishness*, a thing to be brushed aside with impatient contempt in the case of a divine being. It was not that the Greek was unacquainted with gods who died and rose again; he had a crowd of them in his pantheon, poetic personifications of the processes of nature in its decay and in its renewal; but he had never a God like this God, despised and rejected,

When the tetrarch shall abjure Him,
The thief blaspheme,
And scribe and soldier jostle
About the shameful tree . . .

he could not, and would not, acquiesce in Him. And those Jews and Greeks are living, and vocal, among our contemporaries and ourselves.

But John is certain that the paradoxical *now* is fitting and right. For him no glory is so unrefutable as the glory of the Cross. You may remember Spenser's picture of Una in her loneliness, when the enchanter Archimago has stolen from her her squire and companion. She is "forsaken, woeful, solitary," in the "woods and wasteness wide." But she is never more lustrous than then. Her angel look—

As the great eye of heaven shyned bright,
And made a sunshine in the shadie place.

So to John the lustre of Christ is at its fullest, when Christ appears most forsaken. The language of the Gospel is proof of this. The writer scarcely permits himself to speak of "death"; that is a word with gloomy and forbidding associations, out of keeping with the one exodus which has "put some colour into death's pale face"; he speaks instead of "glory." And he will not talk of Christ's being "crucified"; crucifixion, as Dr. Edersheim says, is "an unutterable anguish," hideous and hateful; he prefers to talk, as the third and the eighth and the twelfth chapters do, of Christ being *lifted up* (John 8: 14, 28; 12: 32, 34)—a phrase with a double meaning, which raises the mind at once to the cross and to the throne: it recalls the Old Latin of the 96th Psalm, *Dominus regnavit a ligno*, "The Lord hath reigned from the tree." John is very sure that there is no catastrophe but something triumphant in the dying of Christ, and that the great God our Saviour is reigning from the tree.

It has been argued that this Gospel, being the Gospel not of death but of life, has little to say about the Cross. But the truth is precisely the reverse; it has much to say. And we can glean but a few handfuls of corn from a harvest-field that is rich and great.

So, first of all, John makes us see *the glory of the Cross illuminating the whole of Scripture.*

He bids us hearken, as on a day lying far back in his own life but never forgotten, he had hearkened to the cry and welcome of the Baptist, *Here is God's Lamb at last, who bears away the sin*

of the world (John 1: 29), and he intends that we shall link the Baptist's greeting with that Golden Passional of the Old Testament, the fifty-third of Isaiah, and with its vision of a sacrificial Lamb led to the slaughter for our ransom. He points to the death of Christ as the spiritual interpretation of the brazen serpent lifted by Moses in the wilderness (John 3: 14); the symbol surrenders its meaning only when man's curse descends on man's representative, and is removed by Him. And, when we advance to Calvary itself, John is at particular pains to show that its details are palpable fulfilments of the forecasts of prophecy. The legionaries casting lots for the seamless coat; the Saviour's thirst; the fact that not a bone of the blessed body is broken; the spear thrust into the Lord's side (John 19: 24, 28, 36, 37): each, with careful emphasis, is connected with an Old Testament word of God.

It is thus—is it not?—that we shall best prove the unity of Scripture. By recognising in the Cross the key to all that precedes. By discovering the marks and stigmata of Jesus branded ineffaceably on Law and Prophecy and Psalm. By regarding the Bible, from first to last, as one harmonious witness to the grace of God in bearing away the sin of the world. It is a crimson thread which binds the different parts of the Book together. It is the Hill of our Redeemer's *lifting up*, a little Hill among the Alps and Himalayas and Andes of the earth, which dominates the landscape of inspiration, east and west, north and south. Alight where we choose in the breadth and length of the divine Word, Christ crucified is not far distant; and there is the swiftest path to that love of loves which we do not merit, and which we can never repay, which comes to meet us in our sins with a mercy that atones for them all, but which deals in tremendous earnest with these sins, and answers at infinite cost to itself the righteous demands made against them. I once heard Mr. Spurgeon indicate a contrast and announce a predilection. "They said of Grotius," he remarked, "that he found Christ nowhere in the Old Testament, and Cocceius that he found Him everywhere. I had rather," he went on, "err with Cocceius on the side of excess, than with Grotius on the side of defect." So, I trust, should we all. John, at least, has no doubts on the matter. For him the glory of the Cross illuminates the whole of Scripture.

We think again. John makes us see *the glory of the Cross robing and adorning the Sufferer Himself.*

Wherever and whenever we encounter Christ, He is *fairer than the children of men*; but never is His nobleness so victoriously demonstrated as in the article of dying and the hour of His Passion He "makes a sunshine in the shadie place," in that grimmest of the valleys of the shadow of death. The disciple who knew

Him best can furnish many illustrations of it. Weigh and measure if you can, John says, the wonder of the love of Christ in death. He is *the Good Shepherd*, who acts the shepherd's part, and cleaves to the shepherd's vocation, on to the final sacrifice, from which, in His case, there is no escape (John 10: 11). He is the Friend, whose affection for His friends is so masterfully great that He lays down His life for them (John 15: 13). Abelard, with his probing and soaring intellect, and his broken spirit and his sin and penitence, thought that no sentence of Holy Writ, and no other portrait of Jesus, was quite like that, in its tenderness and in its power.

And take in, next, if you can, John says, the wonder of the freedom of Christ in death. No one filches His life from Him; He has *authority to lay it down* and He has *authority to receive it back again* (John 10: 18). It is His priestly offering. It is His kingly gift. He parts with it generously, and will resume it royally when the time comes. He does not die under external compulsion; He dies impelled by an inner purpose which will not be denied. The Cross was not forced upon Jesus; it was embraced by Jesus. But then, gauge and estimate, if you can, John says, the wonder of the obedience of Christ in death. There are imperious and holy necessities to which He bows. There are *musts* from which He would not extricate Himself if He could: *The Son of Man must be lifted up* (John 3: 14; 12: 34), and *the corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die* (John 12: 24). When Crito pleaded with Socrates in the cell at Athens to avail himself of the plans his disciples had been maturing for his deliverance, the old man replied, "No." "Law," he told Crito, "has presided over my birth, my growth, my training, my marriage, all my history; and, if I break it now, I shall be dogged by its angry ghost for ever." Reverence for law —law adamantine and beneficent, stern and good—led our Lord, with a submission beyond that of Socrates, to Calvary and the Cross; and duty wore for Him "the Godhead's most benignant grace."

Love, freedom and obedience: this is the robe the sufferer wears, and these are Christ's adornings, as He climbs the hill and nails Himself to the tree. Are you surprised that, at the Lord's coming, the hill breaks for His apostle into greenness, and the tree blossoms and buds like Aaron's rod? We require a perfect Person, if we are to have a perfect Atonement. What manner of Man must He be, who dies for the spiritual and eternal salvation of men? He must, if one may put it so, be still greater, finer, wiser, and holier than the Man who commands the winds and the waves and they obey Him. There must be no flaw in Him; one slightest flaw will ruin His work. There must be all glory in Him, glory

which is human and glory which is divine; then shall we know and be persuaded that He is qualified for the desperate task of saving us from our sins and changing us into His own image. But this is just the glory which John perceives emanating from the Cross.

We think afresh. John makes us see *the glory of the Cross gleaming out in four directions.* He sets us in a universe more spacious than the universe of earth and sea and sky, and Christ crucified is the centre of it, and His light and His power affect all its parts.

The glory of the Cross mounts *upward,* to God the Father: it is the first of the four directions. First indeed, because the Jesus of John is among us men, in life and in death, chiefly that He may reveal and commend the Father. Perhaps we should go farther, and say not "chiefly" but "solely" or "exclusively"; for let the Father be revealed and commended as He should, and John would hold that all other ends have been reached, and that Christ's work is done. And, even in Christ, nothing reveals God so truly, or commends Him so effectually, as the Cross. It is there, as nowhere else, that we have unfolded in its full content John's definition of the God whom we adore, *God is love* (John 4: 8). "The love of the Father," Dr. Denney has written, "remains an indeterminate sentimental expression, with no clear moral value, and with infinite possibilities of moral misunderstanding," until we behold the Father lifting up His Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but should have everlasting life. This is the love we want, not explaining our sin away, nor minimising it, nor excusing it, but taking all its responsibility and all its wage upon itself, and with so great a sum obtaining for us our freedom. This is the God we worship; not indifferent to the miseries into which we have plunged our life, nor helping us from a remote heaven, but identifying Himself with our necessity, and Himself leading us out into liberty and justification and rest. Such a love and such a God will do more than initiate our redemption. They will never forsake us. They will bear and forbear, and plan and perform, until "sorrow and sin, giant and fiend, are vanquished at last." The glory of the Cross mounts upward to Christ's Father and our Father, Christ's God and our God.

But the glory strikes *downward* also, upon evil and its malignant powers. The Cross resembles the pillar of cloud, standing between the camp of Israel and the camp of Egypt, a light to the one, a darkness and discomfiture to the other. If it is the supreme commendation of God, it is the hammer and scourge and destruction of God's adversary and man's. John dwells on the second direction which the glory takes. *Now shall the prince of this world be*

cast out (John 12: 31) he hears Jesus say in anticipation of Calvary. And when Judas leaves the Upper Room, Judas in whom for the moment Satan has incarnated himself, Jesus can exult that His enemy's overthrow and the prosperous issue of His own campaign are imminent: *Now*, He exclaims in manifest relief, *now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him: and God shall glorify Him in Himself, and straightway shall He glorify Him* (John 13: 31, 32). The divine prevails over the diabolic, and Calvary is the ground where the battle is gained. John never questions the personality of that strong and subtle and cruel and indefatigable *prince of this world.* To his mind Satan is the living protagonist of evil, and a most dread reality. How various his devices are! how hopeless are his captives! But "the ancient prince of hell" is not a match for "the Lord Sabaoth's Son." The Cross seals the downfall of Satan and his kingdom, and snatches the prey from the mighty. One is reminded of the old English saga of Beowulf fighting the Grendel, the monster that devastated Denmark, not with a sword—for what sword could wound and penetrate the dragon's hide?—but with "the handgrip of a man." So Christ fought the wicked and malignant prince, and conquered him for you and me, doing it with His own pierced and bleeding hands. And think you that He cannot free us, hour after hour, and completely, from Satan and his hosts?

And the glory of the Cross flows *inward*, through the soul of man: it is John's third direction. We turn once more to that pregnant object-lesson, the serpent of brass in the wilderness (John 3: 14). To look to it in the simplicity of faith was to be plucked from the gaping jaws of death; and to trust Christ crucified by and for our sins—to trust Him absolutely and alone—is the way, and the one way, by which we pass out of condemnation into pardon and righteousness. Thus the soul's life begins; and its increase and development are equally dependent on the miracle of Calvary. Christ speaks in this Gospel of the law and principle of His household, that we should *eat His flesh* and *drink His blood* (John 6: 53–57). It is as if He, who died once for us, must always be dying and rising again within us, repeating His own experience in that of His people; according to the profound word of John's beloved brother Paul, *I am crucified with Christ, and I live no more, but Christ liveth in me* (Gal. 2: 20). When the Cross breaks first on our gaze, and fills our vision till everything else is superseded, it is the morning of the soul, and we who were dead are a new creation in Christ Jesus. And when the Cross, and the Resurrection behind the Cross, enter practically and experimentally into our being, and enter more and more, the morning light of the soul, so far from being overtaken by shades

of the prison house, marches steadily toward the perfect day. Life is John's *summum bonum*: and he finds life, and life's abundance, flowing from the death of Jesus Christ his Lord.

There is the fourth direction. The glory of the Cross streams *outward*, to a wide and waiting world. We are astonished to meet Caiaphas among the prophets; yet, for a brief instant of foresight and insight, God ordains him to their ministry. *Being High Priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation: and not for the nation only, but that He might also gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad* (John 11: 51, 52). Speaking under the impulse of the Holy Ghost, and with a heavenly authority resident for once in his words, a bad man can testify that Christ's death will bring enfranchisement to many more than the Jews —to enfettered and impotent men beyond the borders of Palestine. And Jesus Himself, when suppliants of Greek birth and nurture asked to see Him, hears the world of the West knocking at His door, and knows that the door cannot be opened but by the rending of His flesh, and finds in the *grain of wheat* (John 12: 24), dying a single seed that thirty or sixty or a hundred seeds may live in its stead, the parable and prediction of what His Cross will do. How resplendently prediction and parable have been vindicated! The human ministry of Christ was carried on under narrow conditions of space and time, and none save a chosen few could come within its benediction. But His Passion, His Sacrifice, and His Atonement broke the barriers down; He emerged from the limitation into a large room; and, ever since He was *lifted up from the earth*, He has *drawn all men* to Himself (John 12: 32). For His uplifting has compelled and secured other upliftings too.

Uplifted are the gates of brass,
The bars of iron yield;
Behold the King of Glory pass!
The Cross hath won the field.

Upward, downward, inward, and outward, the glory of the Cross travels and gleams. Nothing, in earth or in heaven, in time or in eternity, wields an influence so multiform and vast.

For a few minutes more we linger over one aspect of this glory which interests ourselves—the power which the Cross of Christ exerts upon the new life. We have had hints of the power already, but a sentence or two ought still to be said.

It is Christ's Cross which begets in you and me the glory of the new life in its quiet and unperturbed assurance. The recon-

ciliation He made is a complete reconciliation. His work is perfect, wanting nothing. There is no condemnation—there never will or can be any—to them who are in Christ Jesus. To believe in the Son of God once for all delivered for our offences, and to be haunted by the fear of an adverse verdict at the bar of our Judge, or to be uncertain that we are children in the family—this is to be chargeable with a pitiful and blameworthy inconsistency. Really to believe in the Cross is to be conscious of, and gladdened by, a love of God which goes deeper than all our sins, and is able and willing to emancipate us from them all. It has been wisely said that nothing is more characteristic of churches than their attitude to assurance. "In the Roman Church it is akin to presumption; in the Protestant Churches it is a privilege or a duty; but in the religion of the New Testament it is simply a fact" (James Denney, *The Death of Christ*, p. 289). This is why discipleship in the New Testament throbs and quivers with joy, joy in the Lord, joy which is the Christian's strength. And as with churches, so with individuals. Assurance should never appear to be presumption. It should not be an occasional privilege, kept for the aristocracy of the kingdom, nor merely a high duty, to be coveted earnestly and sought—

> with toil of heart and knees and hands
> Thro' the long gorge to the far light.

Since Christ has died for the chief of sinners, and since He is our Christ, it should be a fact, almost incredible if you will, but altogether incontestable; and we should know that in our Saviour we have passed from death unto life. Then joy will be our habit and heritage, our impulse and our sustenance. Each of us will be God's happy warrior, "attired with sudden brightness like a man inspired."

It is Christ's Cross, too, which fosters in you and me the glory of the new life in what may be called its sensitiveness and intensity. There is a piercing, regnant, overwhelming appeal in the Cross. It quickens. It stimulates. It captures, and conquers, and commands. It cleanses the nature, and keeps it clean. The sloth which besets our souls, their half-measures and indulgences, their inclination to be contented with a slack and slipshod godliness, their excuses and selfishnesses and compromises, are every one arraigned and convicted and sent to execution, when we have a true understanding of Calvary. We see at once that no summons can be addressed to the affections which has such potency as the summons of One who died to retrieve our derelict lives from death. Dora Greenwell's pitman cries—

I've got a word in my heart, that has made it glad, yet has made it sore;
I've got a word like a fire in my heart that will not let me be,
Jesus, the Son of God, who loved and who gave Himself for me.

"Like a fire in our hearts" the Cross is, when we live looking toward it and Him who fastened Himself to its anguish and ignominy; and, morning and night, and summer and winter, it "will not let us be." But it should do as much for the conscience as for the affections. We deplore the weakening of the sense of sin in our time. Christians themselves are too seldom troubled by sin, acutely, penitently. But we shall shudder at sin, we shall hate and condemn ourselves for our participation in it; we shall recoil from its approach and its solicitation and its strain; we shall hunger and thirst after the holiness which is its opposite; we shall pronounce God's inexorable sentence upon it, and all its thoughts and ways, when we tarry beneath the Cross which sin raised, and when we abide with Him whom sin shamed and slew before He could put it away from us for ever. There is no school where conscience is so kindled into alertness, so instructed, and so refined and deepened, as the school on the Hill of Reproach outside the gate.

Finally, it is Christ's Cross which portrays and communicates to you and me *the glory of the new life in its fullness.* That is a striking word of Jesus which John preserves: *For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth* (John 17: 19). It is His death, which the Lord has in view, for His ministry is over and past when He speaks, and nothing is left Him now but to die. Death is His sanctification of Himself in the most absolute manner, His consecration to God of His Spirit and soul and body—why? That He may make possible our truest consecration, and may declare before us in act and in sacrifice what a thorough and entire consecration is. His Cross removes every obstacle which separated us from God; we trust the Saviour who nailed Himself to it for our sakes; and forthwith we are in a world where God is our Friend, our Owner, and our All. We can approach Him in peace; He has no quarrel with us any more; and in faith and obedience we acknowledge ourselves set apart henceforward for Him and for His service. Yes, but there is more. Surveying the Cross, we are drawn into its fellowship. It is not only the channel of our return to God, and so of our sanctification to Him; it is the standard and model of our sanctification. As Christ consecrated Himself, we, being conformed to Him, following humbly and as far as men and women can in His footsteps, thrusting from us as He thrust from Him all abatements and all reserves—we

consecrate ourselves. *See*, it is written, *that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount* (Heb. 8: 5), not the mount that burned with fire, but the mount that is incarnadined with ruddy and precious blood.

These are the stringencies of the new life; and this is the unearthly fullness. It will demand the continual reception by us, and the unremitting activity within us, of the Holy Spirit. But the Spirit's principal anxiety is to hold Christ crucified before our eyes. As He constrained and enables us to understand Him, and to be changed ourselves into His image, we know—not in word or in tongue, not in doctrine or in theory alone, but in deed and in truth, in personal experience and in daily holy living—the Gospel which John Wesley loved to preach, and which Keswick loves to preach, the Gospel of "Full salvation now."

IV

THE REWARD

And now, O Father, glorify Thou me—John 17: 5.

Sir Sidney Colvin tells us that, when John Keats was a student and dresser in Guy's Hospital, he could, when he chose, bend his mind and will to the tasks before him. Yet his heart was not in them. His thoughts wandered. He declared that poetry and not surgery was the only thing worth living for. Once, when his friend, Charles Cowden Clarke, asked about his prospects in regard to his profession, he acknowledged his own sense of his unfitness for it, and he gave this as his reason: "The other day, during the lecture, there came a sunbeam into the room, and with it a whole troop of creatures floating in the ray; and I was off with them to Oberon and fairyland."

Your Lord and mine had no such truant thoughts and divided interests as John Keats confesses. In the grim hospital of a stricken world, He finished the work appointed Him, without reluctance of mind or will or heart; and, when the work was accomplished, He presented it to His Father as a perfect achievement. Morning, noon, and night, He had walked the sorrow-laden wards, and had drawn near each sickening and repellent case, and had prevailed over the most appalling emergencies. He was our Surgeon and God's Servant, who did not loiter and never spared Himself. But He was like Keats in this, that into His hospital sunbeams came, to brighten its exile and painfulness; and on the path of the sunbeams He travelled away to a better region than Oberon's fairyland—to His own Father's House. He did so especially, when things seemed to be at their worst, when death had caught the Good Surgeon Himself in its toils, and when His hour was come, "*Father*," He said, "it is the last evening, and I have obeyed Thy calls, and everything is done. *Now, glorify Thou me, with Thyself, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was*" (John 17: 5).

When the humiliation seems deepest, Christ passes at a bound into the exaltation. Within an hour of Calvary, He can pray, in quietest hope and assurance, for the wealthy harvest which is to

follow Calvary. He is going *per crucem ad lucem*, and the light will be as of seven days. He is mounting *per ardua ad astra*, and to the "country far beyond the stars," where—

> above noise and danger
> Sweet peace sits crowned with smiles.

His mission is fulfilled; and without a shadow of misgiving, convinced that nowhere has there been the slighest error or so much as an involuntary mistake, with never a plea that God's judgment on His performance may be tempered here and there by mercy—for Christ alone among the sons of men and the sons of God has no need of mercy—He claims the reward of the fulfilment. *I have glorified Thee: now, O Father, glorify Thou me.*

At the wealth of this harvest, at *the glory of this reward*, we are to glance. We cannot see far into a subject so rich and various, but it is our blessedness to see even a little distance.

So, at the outset, *Christ's reward is the Glory of a Personal Home-going.*

Banished men and women are eager to be back in the old unforgotten surroundings where their childhood was spent. In the newer lands of the West and the South, they behold the Hebrides in their dreams, and "the lone shieling on the misty island." Under the Rockies with their "snowtops keen," they see the Antrim hills, Slemish and Trostan, "and the wet rain falling." History commemorates the glorious return of the Waldenses, eight hundred soldiers of the faith whom Henri Arnaud captained—their resolute march out from the Geneva, where they had found refuge in the hour of their distress, to the Alpine valleys from which they could not brook to be sundered for any stretch of time. Christ felt this longing of the heart, the *Heimweh*, the home-sickness. He looked up from earth to the Father's bosom. He hungered to be again where He was in His eternity. There is something wistful, pathetic, strangely appealing, in that *now*, with its note of expectation and satisfaction and yet its note of self-restraint—"*Now, my Father*, the period of banishment is over; the absence has gained its purpose, and run out to its ending; and I lay myself down in Thy breast once more. *Glorify Thou me, with Thine own self:* for Thou art all my delight and all my desire." Christ is afresh, after such midnight and storm, such sleet and hail, in the haven where He would be.

Yet the personal home-going is more than personal; it has its vicarious and gracious side; it spells all good and comfortable things for us as well as for Him. It was the old Christ who returned to His heavenly seat, and yet it was a new Christ. He

was the same, and He was not the same. He went back to resume in its fullness the divinity He had veiled and hidden during that lowly interval of His obedience. But He took with Him from Olivet, the day when the cloud caught Him up, something which He had not possessed in His pre-existence—our true and very manhood; so that, as an old writer has expressed it in a daring but not a presumptuous phrase, "The dust of the earth is on the throne of the Majesty on high." Christ is again the diademed and sceptred King of kings, as He was in His ancient years; but, in this second royalty of His, He is the King of kings attired in our human nature, our Brother as certainly as our Lord.

There is extraordinary consolation in the remembrance. It should refresh us in our present necessities, to think that one of our kith and kin is Master over us, and over all providences and people outside of us, for our well-being. He who is related to us so closely, who has such an intimate understanding of us, who is so much in love with our humanity that He carries it with Him to His government and palace, will without doubt make all things work together for our good. And our future, equally with our present, is safe with Him. "What benefit," the forty-ninth question of the Heidelberg Catechism asks, "do we receive from Christ's Ascension into heaven?" And this is part of the answer, "That we have our flesh in heaven, as a sure pledge that He, as the Head, will also take us, His members, up to Himself." That is our great tomorrow, even more abundant than our today. It shall be a Face like our face that receives us; a Man like to us we shall love, and be loved by, for ever; a Hand like this hand shall throw open the gates of new life, and beckon us in.

There is much more to be said about the home-going of Jesus. It was not only the Son's flight to the Father, whose fellowship is His chiefest joy; and our Elder Brother's elevation to kingship and sovereignty; it is the Priest's entrance through the rent veil to the Most Holy Place, the Priest who bears with Him His own sufficient sacrifice. On the evening of His rising day, He *showed to His disciples His hands and His side*, and they *were glad when they saw* (John 20: 20) the brandmarks of their Lord, the certificates of a completed redemption. These are memorials which He never lays aside. "The Ransomer whose clothes are wet and dyed with blood," to give Him Samuel Rutherford's title—it is He who befriends us in the innermost sanctuary of the heavens. There He pleads our cause, after the sublime fashion of the seventeenth of St. John, but not requiring any more to throw His petitions into the spoken language of the Upper Room in Jerusalem, simply presenting Himself with that constraining eloquence of the nail-prints and the scar. We have peace through His wounds, and

the intercession of the wounds the Father *heareth always* (John 11: 42): they have power with men and with God, an infinite power, and they prevail.

Such is our Lord's home-going. But His reward is *the Glory, also, of an Abiding Paraclete.*

In one sense Christ has gone, but in another sense He never goes. The Holy Spirit, of whom He had so much to say in His last discourse (John 14–16), is Christ Himself under another name. Through the Spirit He revisits His followers, and is with them and within them all the days, unseen, but even nearer, and more of a present help, than He could be in His earthly ministry to the men who continued with Him in His temptations. *I will not leave you orphans,* He said to those who were so heavy-hearted over His departure; *I will come to you* (John 14: 18). So unmistakably He would come, and so efficaciously, that they should be gainers and not losers by the change. They were soon to discover that it was *expedient* (John 16: 7) for themselves, and for the work they had to do, and for the progress of the Kingdom of God, that their Lord was no longer Himself by their side. He was not by their side in visible shape and form; but He was in the citadel of their being, He was the spring and motive of their thought and speech and energy, in a more compelling degree than He had ever been before.

It is not, of course, that the Spirit is not Himself a Person, with an individuality and a life which are properly and incontestably His own. He is as distinctly a Person as the Father is, or the Son. Because He is imperceptible and intangible, moving in a sphere which the heart can explore but not the eye or the ear or the hand or the foot; and because He is very gentle in most of His influences and very quiet in most of His victories; we may not be easily convinced of His real personality. He is so entirely selfless and humble, too, as Christ foretold when He promised Him. The Spirit, our Lord said, would *not come in His own name,* and would *not seek His own glory,* and would *not speak of Himself* (John 16: 13, 14). Jesus Only was to be His theme, and Jesus Only His boast; and if Jesus increased, how willing He should be to decrease, until He was lost from sight altogether! But "men," Canon Arthur Robinson has written (*The Holy Spirit and the Individual,* p. 29), "are more quickly impressed by self-assertion than by self-repression," though, as life goes on, we may change our opinion, and may prize most "the large souls that do not try to impose themselves upon us as smaller natures do." Nothing, at any rate, must rob us of faith in the actual and separate, and compassionate and patient, and vigorous and conquering personality of the Lord the Spirit. Yet He comes to us, and He abides within

us, not for His own sake but for Christ's sake—to render the presence of Christ all pervasive, and deep, and unchanging, and eternal. Let us lay it down as one of the first principles of the new life, let us never forget it, that we have most of the Holy Spirit, when we are least conscious of Him, and most conscious of the Saviour, the Keeper, the Teacher, and the Master, whom He brings, whom He enthrones, and whom He makes more and more our own.

Paraclete He is, in our Lord's pregnant language—language which, in this case, demands many English words to do it justice. He is Advocate and Monitor, Guardian and Protector, Strengthener and Comforter, One called to our side to counsel and support and aid. He is Spirit of Truth; and that is why Christ's teaching is ever-living and ever-growing, why it has endless capacities of adjustment to new conditions, why it is a message not for one age but for all time, and goes on unfolding itself, and after nineteen centuries gleams and coruscates with the dew of morning and youth. He is Spirit of power; and that is why the first Pentecost lifted John and his brethren into a life, a light, a love, a sanctity, a joy, which they had not known previously, and why every subsequent Pentecost of the Christian community and the Christian soul repeats the astonishing miracle. *The Spirit is given because Jesus is glorified* (John 7: 39), and sheds Him down. The Spirit of Jesus, uttering His own revelations, repeating His own wonders, and perpetuating His own activities, through one who is His representative and *alter ego*.

That is the Lord's reward. He is away, and nevertheless He is not away. He is here, among us still, in the Holy Ghost whom He sends in His name.

Yet further, Christ's reward is *the Glory of a Witnessing Church*.

He remains on earth, not only in His divine Vicar and Friend, the *Paraclete* who is the Spirit, but in humbler human friends, whom the *Paraclete* inhabits and inspires. There is the company of faithful people, to whom He is priceless and dear. There is the flock "named after Christ's own heart." When He was Himself resident in our lower world, He had those men whom *the Father gave Him* (John 17: 6, 12). They were dull and slow, backward and disappointing; but His love dressed each of them in a coat of many colours, and to His forbearing and forgiving and tender eyes they were invested with a dignity beyond all Greek and Roman fame. And when He took His journey into the far country to receive His kingdom, He made them His heirs and left them behind, to be His living epistles, to win souls for Him, and to build up the fabric of His cause, until the great hour

arrives when He shall rend His heavens and come again. *I am glorified in them* (John 17: 10) He says.

Christ, out of sight, commits to the Church the burden and the honour of bearing testimony to Him. From the Gospel of John one gleans many marks of the true Church. Faith is foremost and first; for without faith the Church has not so much as begun to be: it is composed of men and women and children who *believe on* Jesus (John 7: 39; 17: 20), trusting themselves to Him for righteousness and sanctification and redemption, for life and death and eternity; it is composed of them, and of no others. Holiness is a *sine qua non*; the Church is in the world but is *not of the world* (John 17: 14, 16); it is *kept from the evil* (v. 15); it is *consecrated in truth* (v. 17); it is *kept in the Name of the Father* (v. 11)—the fleckless, unblemished, lustrous Name, whose radiance abases the noonday sun. Prayer is the Church's prerogative and atmosphere (John 14: 13, 14): there are assurances in this Gospel regarding the possibilities of prayer, and regarding the freedom and boldness with which we should ask, that few of us have grasped in their breadth and height, or are translating into practice as we ought; and, what is just as important, there are danger-signals about the environments and the pre-occupations hostile to prayer, with which we should be immensely more familiar. Gladness is the heritage of the Church; silver and gold its King did not bequeath to it, having Himself chosen a poor man's lot, but He has two legacies for its sons and daughters that are more to be desired—*My peace* (John 14: 27) and *my joy* (John 17: 13) the invincible peace, and the overcoming joy: wherefore, as *The Shepherd of Hermas* says, "Put sadness away from thee, for sadness is the sister of half-heartedness and bitterness"; and, as Bernard of Clairvaux advises, let our hearts reflect that the love of God in Christ is "not simply stronger than death but better than life"; and let us consider, too, in its spiritual as well as its geographical applications, what a traveller in Bible lands notes, that "From Marah to Elim is only a morning's march." And unity is a hall-mark of the Church: *That they all may be one* (John 17: 21–23) is the Lord's entreaty, repeated four times over, for us on whom His heart is set; a unity at once deeper and more elastic than outward uniformity, springing in my brothers and in myself from the life that is hidden with Christ in God; but a unity which has its external attestation none the less, and so convinces the world that Christ and Christianity are divine: without this all other evidences fail; with this, there is a force which the enemy may not gainsay nor resist.

These are the beautiful garments of the Holy City, these the qualities which constitute the Church an authentic witness to its

Head. We should be ashamed that they have not adorned us more clearly and more attractively. It is not only ourselves whom we impoverish. It is not only the world that we defraud of the *apologia* for the faith and the Master we were intended to give it. It is our Lord who misses the commendation and the praise He ought to have from us.

But the Church, which witnesses as a community, consists of individuals who witness one by one. And Christ's reward is *the Glory of a Fruit-bearing Disciple.*

That brings the matter close to each of us. You by yourself, I by myself—we contribute to the wage and the wealth which the heart of Jesus craves. To His friends on the night before His death, He spoke the allegory of the Vine and its branches (John 15: 18); Himself the Vine, and every living and loving follower of His a branch in Him.

I look well at the Vine-branch; it is the delineation of what my Lord designs that I, His disciple, shall be.

I see that life flows into the branch and is received. It is not manufactured with the stir and strain of some panting, revolving, restless machinery. There are no noisy engines. There is no incessant movement of pistons and wheels. It comes, quietly, generously, from the stem of the tree. Outside the little branch itself, the supplies are which enable it to thrive and grow—outside of it, in that mightier organism of which it is a part; and, for itself, it is contented to be a continual borrower, and a debtor through spring and summer and autumn and winter. I daresay that the parallel is not perfect, and that reasonable and moral beings have responsibilities of their own which twigs and tendrils cannot have. Christ commands us to *abide in Him* (John 15: 4) if I would reap the beatitude of His abiding in me. I can recoil from, and refuse, whatever would interrupt our communion. I can keep the avenues of my soul open to Him in self-abandonment and faith and confidence. Yet it is a parallel brimming over with significance. This is its good cheer: Christ maintains, vitalises, enlarges, completes the life He conferred; and as, in sheer helplessness of redeeming and justifying myself, I fell at first into His arms, so to the last, for my progress and my perfecting, I trust Him, and He undertakes for me. Grace in succession to grace the Lord Christ gives, and I am always making myself over to Him. Life flows into the branch and is received.

Next I see that life flows through the branch and is unhindered. Its sap and juices journey into all the branch's turnings and twinings; they want to leave no minutest section of it untouched and dry. If some knot, too independent and too obstinate, should attempt to check their advance, saying in effect to this surging

tide of life, *Hitherto, but no farther*, how the branch suffers from the knot's perversity and stubbornness! Life hates barriers and abridgments; it seeks and it needs an unrestricted channel and an undisputed sway. The independence and the obstinacy are not unknown in the spiritual realm. There is a chamber of my nature, a bit of my history, which I scarcely desire to submit to Christ's indwelling power, Christ's untainted holiness, Christ's revolutionising government: a sin to which I should like to give occasional harbourage, a questionable indulgence I would fain spare and gratify, plans and habits I am disposed to humour though I feel He means me to part with them, modes of saying and doing His right things to which I adhere although He would have me prefer other modes. That spoils my experience, weakens my usefulness, grieves my Lord. He is sensitive to any rebuff. He cannot do me the good He wishes, unless and until He has unhampered rule. The life must flow through the branch unhindered.

But then I see that life flows forth from the branch and is manifested. It has its illustration and its demonstration. It discloses itself in fruit. The fruit is both the tree's and the branch's. In its origin and in its substance it is the tree's; its sweetness and its strength emanate only from the parent stem. Christ enshrined within, in the Person and potency of His Spirit, alters and transfigures me; not merely prompting what words I speak on His behalf and what works I perform for the furtherance of His kingdom, but, behind the words and the works, remaking my character, me myself, into the image of His character, the miniature and epitome of Him Himself. You cannot imagine a biography so greatly to be envied.

Yet I partake of Him after my own manner. For in the divine life-tree the branches are innumerable, and each branch preserves its specific quality, while all are dependent on the one centre and source. A friend told me recently that, talking in Palestine with a grower of Jaffa oranges, he asked him why they had the shape and contour and something of the flavour of lemons. The gardener answered that the orange graft was inserted into a lemon stock, so taking on the lemon's likeness, but none the less remaining an orange still. My poor heart is linked with, and bound to, and introduced into Christ's infinite heart. I take on His likeness, and things belonging to Him which are far deeper than any outward likeness; but I remain myself, and now my temperament has its best expansion, and my faculties have their freest play. And *herein is the Father glorified*, and the world gospellised, and the Lord rewarded, that the disciple *bears much fruit* (John 15: 8). Life flows forth from the branch, and is manifested to Christ's praise.

One thing is left, though it is too big a thing to say much about. Christ's reward is *the Glory of an Incomparable Goal.*

John, in the Gospel, does not lay the same stress as the Synoptists do on the personal Return, the visible Advent, of our Lord. It is not, of course, that he disbelieves in it. The Apocalypse, in which he wrote the visions that came to him when he was in the Spirit in the isle of Patmos, throbs and palpitates with the mighty hope. In the Gospel, moreover, the Apostle hears and repeats the promise of the Master, *I come again, and will receive you unto myself* (John 14: 3). To this "region bright," this "heavenly destiny," John knows and is persuaded that he is "stepping westward"; and his heart is aflame with ardour for it, and is patient in expectancy. But he does not linger, with the particularity of his brother evangelists, over the details of the Advent. Rather, as we have seen, he amplifies the thought of the interior and spiritual Return of Christ to souls who welcome and use the grace of the Holy Ghost. He who cherishes the Holy Ghost will not be taken unawares, will not be shamed, when, "at morn or noon or set of sun," the Lord Himself appears.

And, beyond the Advent, John rises to contemplate and taste beforehand the fruition of the eternal future. He has his cluster of the grapes of Eshcol in the wilderness. "Oh, the full joys," cries Richard Baxter, "offered to a believer in one sentence of Christ's! I would not, for all the world, that one verse had been left out of the Bible—*Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which Thou hast given me* (John 17: 24)." None of us could endure to lose the verse. When Baxter's great contemporary, John Owen, with whom he did not always agree on earth, though they are of the same mind in the heavenly city, lay dying in 1683, a friend called to inform him that his *Meditations on the Glory of Christ* had begun to pass through the press. "I am glad to hear it," the old man exclaimed; "but the long-wished-for day is come at last, when I shall see that glory in another manner than I have ever done, or am capable of doing, in this world." So you and I, if we can add with John Owen, "I am going to Him whom my soul has loved, or rather who has loved me with an everlasting love—which is the whole ground of my consolation." Christ *wills* that we behold His glory; and no fiat of His kingly will can be overthrown.

There lived in Scotland, last century, a great saint, a great scholar, and a little child in the family of God—Dr. John Duncan. "I am getting old," he said to a friend, "and can't rack my brains perpetually over knotty questions. But there are two scenes from old age I often think of. The Archduchess of Hungary told me

once of a theological Professor of Pesth, who, when in his dotage, was oblivious of everything. But troops of children used to follow him, and, laying his hand on their heads, all he could say was, 'Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ.' The other story is of the old man who was dying and his memory quite gone. His own name was mentioned: 'Don't know that man.' His grandchildren's names: he shook his head. The Saviour's Name—when, leaping up with energy, he cried, 'Ah, Jesus Christ! my Saviour, my God!' Were I so old as to be in my dotage," John Duncan added, "I should like to have the spirit of these men."

Old or young, we shall echo the wish and prayer. God make the Christ of the Pre-existence, of the Ministry, of the Cross, and of the Reward, all our Salvation, all our Desire, and all our Glory.